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A NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK AND HEBREW TEXTS

THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE BOOK OF RUTH

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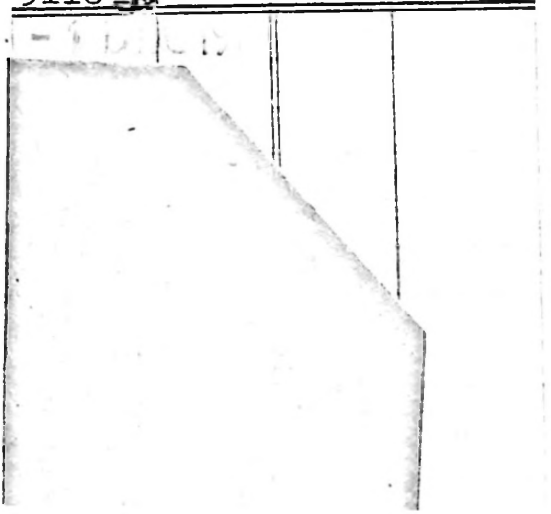

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PREFACE

My hearty thanks, and the thanks of all the supporters of the *Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures*, are due to Mr. Edward Eyre, who has given yet another example of his zealous encouragement of Catholic scholarship by financing this new part.

C.L.

SOME TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

O.T. is used for 'Old Testament'.

M.T. is used for the 'massoretic' or traditional Jewish Hebrew text, which alone has been copied in Hebrew manuscripts, the earliest of which now complete and extant probably belongs to the 9th century A.D. In itself the massoretic text is a sound one, but occasionally the translations here mentioned or the targums or some other authorities indicate an early alternative that seems preferable. Deviations of any moment from the massoretic text are mentioned in the notes.

The 'pointing' of the Hebrew text by signs indicating vowels and pauses, *etc.*, and serving originally to control the public reading, *etc.*, was gradually developed by Jewish grammarians in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.

LXX is used for the 'Septuagint', the oldest Greek translation of the Old Testament, made before the time of Christ by the Jews and used officially by the Greek Christians.

The 'Vulgate' is the Latin translation of the Bible made for the most part by St. Jerome from the original languages at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries A.D. It gradually came to be the official Latin version.

The 'Peshitta' is the corresponding Syriac version. The New Testament probably dates from the 1st half of the 5th century A.D.; the Old Testament is older, but probably was not composed at one time or by one author. It is quoted from Walton's Polyglot (1657).

The 'Mishnah' was the oral or traditional law of the Jews, probably reduced to writing before the end of the 2nd century A.D.

The 'targums' are the Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, finally edited in the 5th century A.D. and afterwards. They change and expand the Hebrew text freely. These too are quoted from Walton's Polyglot.

BDB. is used for *The Hebrew and English Lexicon*, edited by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs (Oxford, 1906).

MSS. or MS. signifies 'manuscripts' or 'manuscript'.

A very simple system of transliteration from the Hebrew is used, refinements upon which (to use Canon Danby's words in his recent translation of the Mishnah) would be 'unnecessary for the Hebraist and meaningless to the non-Hebraist'.

References to the Book of Ruth itself are usually made by chapter and verse alone, without naming the book.

The following works are quoted by the names of the authors only:

(1) Franz von Hummelauer, S.J.: *Commentarius in Libros Iudicum et Ruth* in the *Cursus Scripturae Sacrae* (Paris, 1888).

(2) Paul Joüon, S.J.: *Ruth: commentaire philologique et exégétique* (Rome, 1924).

(3) G. A. Cooke, D.D.: *The Book of Ruth* (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, 1913).

(4) A. R. S. Kennedy, D.D.: *The Book of Ruth: the Hebrew text, etc.* (S.P.C.K., 1928: mainly linguistic).

SUMMARY OF INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Goel in General.

Much of the story of the Book of Ruth turns upon the rights and duties of a 'next of kin', in Hebrew a *Goel*. There is nothing quite answering to the conception of the *Goel* in English, which it is therefore necessary to explain first of all in itself, before we turn to the present story. Strictly speaking, the word should be written *Go'el*, where the soft breathing represents the Hebrew letter Aleph; but it has seemed better here to save both printer and reader this constantly recurring complication. It should be pronounced, however, in two syllables, go-ail. In the text it has seemed best to translate it simply by 'kinsman', a word therefore to be understood in a special technical sense, which the reader should endeavour to keep before him. In accordance with the more general usage, the cognate verb is rendered 'redeem' (iii. 13: iv. 4, 6: where see notes), and the abstract substantive 'redemption' (iv. 7: *cf.* iv. 6, note).

A fundamental principle in primitive semitic law and custom was the *solidarity of the clan*, probably founded in the first instance not upon any directly religious belief, but upon the obvious needs of defence and of other common action. The clan acted as one, and acknowledged as its own corporate rights and duties the rights and duties of the individuals composing it. This may correctly be stated as a general principle, although allowance must be made for many limitations of various sorts in the application of it.

The primary function of the Goel was to represent the clan in the assertion of its rights and duties; his first duty was towards the clan, in virtue of his solidarity with it, and it was only in the discharge of that duty that he might have to act for good or for evil towards those who had entered into relation with the clan. This action again would be directed upon individuals, though upon their side too would be involved the principle of solidarity with the clan. The

solidarity evidently admitted of degrees, so that the function of representing the clan naturally fell upon the next of kin; indeed, the clan itself was merely the more immediate embodiment of a solidarity that was held to embrace within itself both the tribe and the nation. It could even be extended in theory to the whole human race, but this without any practical applications such as might call for notice here.

Because the Goel was the next of kin, the word came to bear this meaning, which however can hardly be primitive. The nearest approach to it appears to be the Latin *vindex*; it means a 'vindicator' in various senses, one who has a right and duty to enforce, ultimately, as has been said, a corporate right which it belongs to the next of kin to vindicate. In considering the meaning of the term and the nature of the institution in the Old Testament, what has been said above of general semitic notions upon the subject must not be disregarded, though their development cannot be traced in any detail historically. It can safely be asserted, however, that in this matter as in some others the Mosaic Law presupposed and modified for the better the traditional laws and customs. A parallel case is to be found in Deut. xxiv.1—4, where according to the correct translation the Law is not ordering divorce, but restricting it in the wife's interest; if she become another man's, he who divorced her may never take her back. The scope of the Goel's office, such as we actually find it in the Old Testament, we may consider according as it embraced *property* or *persons*; it will be well also to add a few words upon the spiritual application of the term and concept to *God*.

To come therefore first to *property*: the principle of solidarity was applied to the possession of land, although it did not of course exclude private ownership but (as in all cases) included it within a more general right as the immediate application of that right. The application of the principle to land, however, such as we find it in the Old Testament, can hardly be primitive, since it could have but little meaning for nomads; rather, a general principle of property was applied to land when land came to be fixed property.

The main regulation is in Levit. xxv. 25—28; if a Hebrew be compelled by poverty to sell land, his Goel must buy it back. Doubtless he would be expected (as in Ruth iv: Jerem. xxxii. 6—9) to buy it if possible from the original seller. It may be mentioned at once that the way to reckon to the Goel is explained in Levit. xxv. 48—49: brothers come first, then uncles, then uncles' sons, and the matter is not pursued further. In Num. xxxvi the principle at stake is said to be the retention of land within the tribe, but the actual regulation made secures its retention within the clan (*mishpachah*) of the tribe (*matteh*: Num. xxxvi. 6, 8), so that clan solidarity is respected. Jeremiah is the Goel in respect of land in Jerem. xxxii. 6—9, already referred to; and it should be noted that in Ruth iv the first question is the Goel's purchase of the land.

Another application of the principle of solidarity receives a passing mention in Num. v. 8, where it is taken for granted that restitution is to be made to the Goel if it cannot be made to the injured party, presumably because of death. If there be no Goel, the restitution is to be made to Jehovah, and is therefore mentioned here among other priestly dues. The passage does not of itself require that Jehovah should have been conceived as the ultimate Goel.

Turning now to *persons*, we find three main applications of the duties of the Goel: he must redeem his kinsman from *slavery*, avenge his *blood*, and raise up *offspring* to him. The first is a simple affair, indicated in Levit. xxv. 47—55, where (as has been said) the way to reckon the Goel is also explained. The avenging of blood is a more complicated matter, and the subject of much legislation; here, no doubt, as elsewhere, a primitive practice is presupposed but regulated. Instead of the Goel being obliged at all hazards to find the slayer of his kinsman and kill him, the Law intervenes in order to save the victim if innocent; and no doubt its action would also tend to prevent any permanent feud that might arise between two clans on account of the death.

There is no mention of 'the avenger of blood' (*Goel ha-dam*) in Gen. ix. 6 when it lays down the principle,

'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed'; but in the light of the other evidence we may suppose the writer to have had the Goel in mind. In Exod. xxi. 12 the implication is more obvious, since the following verses offer the first hint of the cities of refuge, for which the full regulations are given in Deut. xix: Num. xxxv. The manslayer may flee to these cities, but the elders are not to protect him from 'the avenger of blood' if he be guilty of murder; if he be judged innocent, and the death accidental, then he will be protected so long as he stays within the territory of the city of refuge. If the Goel find him outside of it, he may kill him. This state of affairs is to last until the death of the high priest, when the manslayer may return without further danger to his own country. No ransom is to be accepted for the manslayer's life if he be guilty, nor shall the innocent manslayer be given his freedom for a ransom before the death of the high priest (Num. xxxv. 31—32). The case of goring by an ox in Exod. xxi. 30 is a peculiar one. The six cities of refuge are to belong to the Levites (Num. xxxv. 6); they are duly set up in Jos. xx.

In the story told to David in II Sam. (Kings) xiv. 6—11 it is particularly clear that the Goel (or 'avenger') of blood (xiv. 11) is acting for the 'whole clan' (xiv. 7). In I (III) Kings xvi. 11 it is expressly said that Zimri after assassinating Baasha left him no Goel, no next of kin to avenge his death; he killed off all his kinsfolk too. The principle of solidarity in offence is repudiated in Deut. xxiv. 16, a very important stand made by the Mosaic Law against what was probably common semitic custom; Ezekiel (xviii. 20) refers to this, and it is expressly said to have been observed (evidently the fact attracted attention) in II (IV) Kings xiv. 6 and the parallel II Chron. (Paral.) xxv. 4. In II (IV) Kings ix. 26 there is clearly understood to be a solidarity in offence in actual fact, and not in mere principle; and this appears to be the best explanation of Jos. vii. 24—25, where Achan's sons and daughters are slain along with him. In II Chron. (Paral.) xix. 8—11 King Jehoshaphat set up his high court at Jerusalem to judge 'between blood and blood',

so that it discharged the functions of the avenger of blood, who after this disappears from Old Testament history.

The third main duty of the Goel in regard of persons has been said above (p. xvii) to be the raising of *offspring* to his kinsman; but this involves a rather intricate question, especially in the form in which it comes before us in the Book of Ruth. It therefore seems best to reserve the whole matter for the following chapter, wherein will also be treated in its place such evidence upon the point as we can gather from this book, with an explanation of the relevant passages.

Meanwhile we may review briefly the *spiritual applications* of the name and concept of Goel, although as a matter of fact they have little or no bearing on the Book of Ruth, and indeed are not based very closely upon the analogy of the human Goel. This of itself is a sufficient proof that they are secondary, and do not represent a primitive element in the concept. There does not therefore appear to be sufficient ground for saying that 'the whole conception of the Goel was based on the solidarity of the interests of the tribe and the nation with those of the national God' (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, *s.v.*). It is enough to say with Prof. Adams Brown in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (*s.v.* Redeemer, Redemption) that 'Jehovah is represented as doing for the oppressed what the human Goel would do, if he were living'. Thus in regard of the whole nation the verb corresponding to Goel is used of the deliverance from Egypt in the past (Exod. vi. 6: xv. 13: Ps. lxxiv [lxxiii]. 2: *etc.*), and also of its idealized deliverance in the future, chiefly in the second part of Isaiah, where the term Goel is itself employed (*e.g.*, Isai. xli. 14). The verb is also applied to God in regard of individuals (*e.g.*, Ps. ciii [cii]. 4). In Job xix. 25 it is enough to say that Goel appears to mean simply 'vindicator', as often in the case of God, because it would be as a vindicator that the human Goel would discharge his office.

Such are the main applications of Goel and its cognate terms to God, and they are evidently not of a character to make us suppose that they offer a key to the human applications of the word, even apart from the applications to

marriage, to be considered in the next chapter. Neither the doctrine that God is the true owner of the land, and that the Hebrews (as we should say) are only His tenants (Levit. xxv. 23), nor the principle that restitution must be made to God in default of a human Goel (Num. v. 8), seem to require the concept of God as Goel at all. On the other hand, the use of the verb of Goel in Levit. xxvii to signify the recovery (or 'redemption') from God of what has been vowed to Him follows an obvious analogy; the man, so to speak, acts as his own Goel.

2. The Goel in Marriage.

In order to understand this question it is necessary to take into account, not merely the primitive semitic conception of the Goel, but also the position of woman in primitive semitic society. 'In primitive and semi-primitive societies', writes Prof. G. A. Cooke (on iv. 5), 'women have no independent rights of their own; they are treated as part of the property of the family to which they belong'. Without discussing this principle at large, we may take it as true of primitive semitic society, so far as its laws and usages can be reconstructed from the available evidence; and once more the Mosaic Law is seen to modify a previous usage that lent itself easily to grave abuse.

In the matter of law and custom, as of language, the Arabs appear to have retained much of what was lost elsewhere; living in what appears to have been the primitive home of the race, they were subject to influences that made for stability rather than change. Hence it comes about that what in them is later in date may represent an earlier stage of development. In the present matter the Qur'an enacts as follows:

> O ye who believe! it is not lawful for you to inherit women's estates against their will; nor to hinder them, that ye may go off with part of what ye brought them, unless they commit fornication manifestly. (Sura iv. 23.)

Mr. Palmer, whose translation is here quoted (Oxford, 1928), explains 'hinder' in a note: 'that is, from marrying again'. Sale's note on the passage (*The Koran*, London, 1844, p. 62) runs as follows:

> It was customary among the pagan Arabs, when a man died, for one of his relations to claim a right to his widow, which he asserted by throwing his garment over her: and then he either married her himself, if he thought fit, on assigning her the same dower that her former husband had done, or kept her dower and married her to another, or else refused to let her marry unless she redeemed herself by quitting what she might claim of her husband's goods. This unjust custom is abolished by this passage.

Prof. G. A. Cooke on Ruth iii. 9 takes from Robertson Smith's *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (ed. 2, p. 105) the following note upon the passage of the Qur'an just quoted, from Tabari's commentary:

> In the Jahiliya, when a man's father or brother or son died and left a widow, the dead man's heir, if he came at once and threw his garment over her, had the right to marry her under the dowry of her lord,[1] or to give her in marriage and take her dowry. But if she anticipated him and went off to her own people, then the disposal of her hand belonged to herself.

It will be sufficiently clear from these passages, without a discussion of all details, that the Qur'an, like the Mosaic Law, is here restricting the rights of the Goel over the widow, which were founded upon the law or custom that she would belong to the Goel by inheritance as part of the dead man's property. This general principle is recognized by Père Joüon as still in force, and he quotes Père Jaussen, O.P. (*Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, p. 48) to the effect that in principle the dead husband's brother should marry the widow, and often does so, although if she objects she is free to return to her father. Père Joüon (p. 9) adds that the reason for the marriage is not primarily to raise up posterity to the dead man, since the widow may already have children.

[1] *i.e.*, the dowry already paid by her deceased lord.

This is true also of the Assyrian institution of the Goel (if we may apply to it the Hebrew term), as explained (for example) by M. Cruveilhier in the *Revue Biblique* for October, 1925, in an article entitled, *Le Lévirat chez les Hébreux et chez les Assyriens* (vol. 34, pp. 524—546). Whereas the Hebrew institution has for its object to provide the dead man with posterity, the Assyrian regulations are chiefly concerned with what has been given for the bride, and take no account of the presence or absence of children. As a matter of fact the only case of what can be called a levirate law[1] regards a man, not married, but betrothed; if his brother die leaving a widow, who was living in her father's house,[2] the surviving brother must marry her (pp. 533, 542). There is no obligation to marry the widow in the exact case envisaged by the Hebrew law of levirate (p. 541).[3] M. Cruveilhier is of the opinion that both the Hebrew and the Assyrian levirate might require bigamy (pp. 544—5). This does not appear to be true of the biblical Hebrew levirate,[4] nor even to be proved of the Assyrian. In the present story Boaz does not appear to be already married; *cf.* iv. 9—12, summary.

In the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi a widow is allowed under certain conditions to keep or inherit property from her husband (nos. 150, 171); this fact and the absence of any mention of the Goel appear to indicate a more developed social system than that of the Pentateuch or of the

[1] For the levirate law as such see pp. xxvii—xxix.

[2] This condition brings in the ulterior question of a different marriage system, discussed at length by Robertson Smith in his *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, which however is not sufficiently germane to the present subject for discussion here.

[3] Dr. C. H. Gordon, in an article entitled *Parallèles nouziens aux lois et coutumes de l'Ancien Testament* (translated from the English) in the *Revue Biblique* for Jan., 1935, gives an example of a levirate stipulation from the Nuzi texts (*Rev. Bib.*, vol. 44, p. 37). See also Dr. J. W. Jack on 'Recent Biblical Archæology' in the *Expository Times* for May, 1935. Also below, p. xxvi, footnote.

[4] *Cf.* p. xxviii. The Mishnah on the other hand certainly allows the levirate where it entails bigamy, *e.g.*, in *Yebhamoth* (the treatise on the levirate) iii. 6—7.

Book of Ruth: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxv—xxvi, with the references to Judith viii. 7 and the Mishnah.

It has already been remarked (p. xvii) that in Ruth iv the first question raised in regard of the Goel's willingness to exercise his right concerns the purchase of the land. It is after the Goel has announced his intention of doing this that Boaz declares that this exercise of his right involves that, according to the better and practically certain reading, 'thou acquireth also Ruth' (iv. 5). It may also be noted at once that the passage just quoted from Tabari aptly illustrates Ruth's invitation to Boaz to throw his garment over her in iii. 9, since what she desires is precisely that he as the Goel should claim her for his own. For this throwing of the garment we may also compare Ezek. xvi. 8: Deut. xxii. 30 (xxiii. 1): Mal. ii. 16, with note. Père Joüon on iii. 9 gives references to show that among certain Arabs this symbolic action is still in use. At the meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study in January, 1934, Dr. Julius Lewy, in a paper[1] on 'Old Assyrian Cuneiform Texts and the Old Testament', illustrated the practice still further from these texts.

In the case of the Book of Ruth, however, it should be observed that the field does not seem to have belonged to Ruth's husband, but only to Naomi's; and the question arises, why does not the Goel claim both the estate and Naomi? Evidently Naomi, though a widow, is recognized as having the rights of proprietorship. This point is not made clear in the story, but the explanation may well be that Naomi was past the age for marriage (i. 12); since under these circumstances it was unlikely that anyone would wish to take her to wife, it may have been the Hebrew law or custom that she should be left in possession of her dead husband's property. She is even recognized as the owner of what had belonged to her two sons (iv. 9), so that it would not affect the

[1] since published under the title *Les textes paléo-assyriens et l'Ancien Testament* in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, vol. 110, no. 1, July-August, 1934, pp. 29—65: see pp. 31—33. I owe the reference to Prof. Stanley Cook.

situation if the field were supposed to have passed in the first place from Elimelech to Mahlon.

To explain this last fact, we must first revert for a moment to Prof. Cooke's dictum, quoted at the beginning of this chapter: 'in primitive and semi-primitive societies women have no independent rights of their own; they are treated as part of the property of the family to which they belong'. This has already been illustrated to some extent from Arab law and custom; and Robertson Smith[1] explicitly lays it down that women could not inherit in early Arabia. Such an inability to inherit appears to be presupposed in Num. xxvii. 1—11, where it is removed, with the later corollary (Num. xxxvi: *cf.* p. xvii) that heiresses are to marry within the clan, so that land shall not pass out of its possession. In Num. xxvii, it is true, it is the daughters of a dead man that are to possess his inheritance, and there is no question in the whole chapter of his wife; but it appears right to suppose that in the case given the wife is already dead, since otherwise she would be left entirely without provision, and indeed would be subject to marriage by the Goel, which would carry the property with it and leave nothing for the daughters. For the same reasons it may also be presumed that in the general law of Num. xxvii the wife is supposed to be dead, but that she would be given a prior claim over the daughters if alive.

In the case of Naomi it appears necessary to suppose more than this, since (as has been said) she is even recognized as the owner of what had belonged to her two sons (iv. 9: p. xxiii). This she appears to do as inheriting the full rights of her husband; and being too old to have a Goel herself (i. 12: p. xxiii), she appears able to act as Goel to her daughters-in-law, and it is only when she is about to sell the property and dispose of Ruth herself (iv. 5) that it becomes the duty of the next Goel in proper order (iii. 12: iv. 4) to acquire both. It is possible that one reason why Naomi inherits the property of her sons rather than their wives is that they are foreigners, being Moabite; but there is no hint

[1] *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, ed. 2, p. 117.

of this in the text, and it is against such a view that nobody appears to find it wrong that Ruth herself should claim a Goel. Her marriage with a Hebrew, at all events taken with her adoption of his country and religion (ii. 12), seems to have been looked upon as giving her a full Hebrew status.

Nevertheless the case was in every way a peculiar one; and if all this were regarded as an equitable arrangement and as a right interpretation of custom rather than as a matter of strict right, Ruth would not be obliged to submit to it. Hence her devotion to her mother-in-law is shown in the first place by her returning with her from Moab—we may omit for the present the religious motive—but also in the second place by her seeking to be married to the Goel. Boaz includes the religious motive in his praise of the first action (ii. 11—12), and doubtless includes devotion to her mother-in-law under the kindness shown to himself and his kin in her second action (iii. 10). Clearly he was won by her from the first, and it is delicately implied that she would have had no difficulty in any case in finding a husband (*ibid.*); but it is really Naomi who profits from the fact that Ruth's husband is in fact the Goel. As has already been explained, there could be no question of Boaz marrying Naomi; but in marrying Ruth he is acting as the Goel of Naomi's son Mahlon (*cf.* iv. 5, with note), though we are not told the exact relationship. Boaz's eldest son would thus be reckoned to Mahlon, and consequently would virtually be Naomi's grandson. Hence the neighbours say that a son is born to Naomi (iv. 17), and congratulate her upon being provided with a Goel (iv. 14), evidently a far nearer one than she could have otherwise hoped for, likely to provide lovingly for her and to survive her; and she upon her side becomes his nurse (iv. 16). But they fully recognize Ruth's share in all this: 'thy daughter in law, who hath borne him, loveth thee, yea, she is better to thee than seven sons' (iv. 15).

Thus far emphasis has rather been laid upon the Goel's *right* to take widow and property; but with the Hebrews the law and custom took a turn more favourable to the widow, since it became even more his duty. This would

tend to give the widow rights as against the Goel, and later made it possible for her original husband to provide for her, as in Judith viii. 7 and in the Mishnah (*Kethubhoth* iv. 12). This tendency too may help somewhat to explain the independence of Naomi and Ruth. It is her right rather than her duty which we see laudably asserted by Ruth, since she makes a positive claim upon Boaz (iii. 9), the justice of which he clearly acknowledges (iii. 10—13); and when the nearer Goel declines to fulfil the duty, it is upon the ground of moral impossibility (iv. 6). It is also clear (iv. 10) that at least one son of the new marriage would be reckoned to the widow's husband. We may infer from the levirate law (Deut. xxv. 6), shortly to be mentioned, and from the inherent probability of the case, that only the eldest son would be so reckoned, since the widow's second husband must also be provided with issue; but the Book of Ruth itself does not make this clear.

The case of Judah and Tamar (Gen. xxxviii) further illustrates the positive duty of the Goel, being itself prior to the Mosaic legislation. Judah tells Onan to raise up seed to his brother Er; and it is clearly implied that he should also have told the remaining brother Shelah to take Tamar. He did in fact tell Tamar to wait until Shelah was old enough to marry her; but this seems to have been a mere pretext for not effecting the marriage (xxxviii. 11, 14). Tamar therefore contrives to conceive by Judah himself, who upon realizing what has happened confesses that she has justice on her side, because he did not give her his third son for husband (Gen. xxxviii. 26). The principle upon which Tamar acts, and which Judah acknowledges as just, seems to be that since the proper Goel, Judah's third son Shelah, is not allowed her, she has a right to the next Goel after him, Judah himself.[1]

[1] There is the parallel obligation to marry the father-in-law both in the Assyrian (§33, otherwise §34) and Hittite (§193) codes: *cf.* Cruveilhier (as on p. xxii), p. 540: Lewy (as on p. xxiii), pp. 30—31: Hrozný, *Code Hittite* (Paris, 1922). I am indebted to Father Eric Burrows for help in regard of these texts. In the present state of the evidence semitic

In this case also the raising up of seed to the dead brother evidently implied that at least one son would be reckoned his, and (once more upon the analogy of the levirate and from inherent probability, as above) we may suppose that it would be the eldest son, and the eldest son only; he would be reckoned the heir of the dead brother, to whose property he would also succeed, so that the living brother would merely have the administration of it until this eldest son was able to look after it himself. This has a bearing upon the Goel's refusal to buy in Ruth iv. 6. He was able and willing to act as Goel so long as there was merely question of buying the land (iv. 4); but when there is question of marrying Ruth as well (iv. 5), he does not dispute the principle that she must go with the land and that he must marry her, but merely pleads that he is not wealthy enough to do so (iv. 6). The reason is that, while he would have to pay for the property (along with which Ruth would, of course, be his without further payment: *cf.* iv. 5, note), he would only have a temporary usufruct in it, until his eldest son was able to manage it for himself as the dead man's heir. The Goel would thus to a large extent be spending his money (and also bringing up his eldest son) without return; this the nearest Goel could not afford to do, but Boaz, the next Goel in order (iii. 12: iv. 4), was a wealthy man (ii. 1), and took upon himself the duty instead. What was the precise relationship between Naomi and these two Goels, or their mutual relationship to each other, the writer is not concerned to mention; he does not even tell us the nearer Goel's name. This lack of interest in unnecessary details rather makes for the historical character of the narrative; as a rule the apocryphal literature does not leave such obvious gaps.

So far we have not been dealing with the levirate law itself,[1] although the incident of Judah and Tamar in Gen. xxxviii, already recorded above, may show us precisely the

influence appears to be enough to account for the Hittite and Nuzi (*cf.* p. xxii, note 3) usage; but an independent Anatolian usage remains a possibility.

[1] so called from the Latin *levir*, meaning a husband's brother.

same custom already in force; the only doubtful points in the Judah incident are whether the brothers were actually living together, as required by Deut. xxv. 5, and whether (as is more likely) the firstborn, and the firstborn alone, would be reckoned to the dead brother. In the case of Ruth, as actually presented in this story, there cannot be question of the levirate law as such; we must evidently conclude from Ruth i. 1—3, and still more from i. 12—13, that Elimelech had no other sons. The levirate marriage is in fact, as has already been pointed out (p. xvi), another case where the Mosaic Law presupposes and modifies a law or custom already existing. In this case it restricts the legal obligation to a very definite case. It is explicitly stated only in Deut. xxv. 5—10: where brothers have been living together, and one of them has married and died without issue, the other brother (evidently presumed to be single at the time) is to marry the widow, and the firstborn of this marriage is to be reckoned to the dead brother. It is clearly implied that this firstborn is to inherit the dead brother's property; it is also natural to suppose that *only* the firstborn is meant.[1]

It has just been said that in the case of Ruth there cannot be question of the levirate law as such. Nevertheless there appears to be an allusion to it in i. 11, for Naomi's rhetorical question, an utterly impossible question demanding a negative answer, is more naturally understood of sons by Elimelech. In the next two verses she makes the suggestion (likewise as an impossible one) that she should have sons by a second husband, and she seems to take it for granted that they would fulfil the levirate law no less than sons by Elimelech. Prof. Cooke (*ad loc.*) writes that 'there is nothing to show that a levirate marriage was customary in such a case', *i.e.*, in the case of half-brothers; but where the duty of the Goel as such was still upheld by tradition and custom, it is natural to suppose that a strict view would be taken of the definite

[1] S.R. Driver on Deut. xxv. 4 (*Int. Crit. Com.*) seems to misunderstand this regulation, as though *all* the sons were reckoned to the dead brother. From the fact that the brothers were living together, it is natural to conclude that the survivor was not married: *cf.* p. xxii.

levirate law. And Naomi's own words greatly strengthen this presumption.

To come back to this law itself. If the surviving brother refuses to marry the widow, she is to loose his shoe and spit in his face (Deut. xxv. 9). This latter indignity was clearly intended to show that it was shameful on his part not to discharge his obligation. In the light of Ruth iv. 7—8 we may presume that the loosening of the shoe had originally quite another significance. In the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (*s.v.* Shoes, col. 4492) it is suggested that the right explanation of Ps. lx. 8 (lix. 10) and Ps. cviii. 9 (cvii. 10) is that 'casting a shoe on a piece of land was the sign of taking possession of it'; and it is natural to suppose that by an analogous symbolism to draw off the shoe was to renounce all claim to possession. From this it would be but a short step to the wider use of Ruth iv. 7—8, especially if we may interpret this latter as indicating the act of him who did actually renounce possession. Such is likewise the probable explanation of the Bedouin form of divorce mentioned by Robertson Smith in his *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (ed. 2, p. 105, note): 'she was my slipper and I have cast her off'. Among the Jews the simple rite prescribed by Deuteronomy was elaborated by the rabbis into the 'Halizah' ceremony: see, for example, the article *Halizah* in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, where it is said that 'at present Halizah is the general rule and marriage the rare exception'. In Lev. xviii. 16 and xx. 21 marriage with a brother's widow is forbidden; the levirate law, though selected from a wider practice for survival, has become a special exception.

3. The Book of Ruth.

With all that has been said so far upon the Goel presupposed, it is now possible to consider the Book of Ruth and its story in itself. Ruth is certainly the heroine, and at the outset a word or two may be said upon her name. It is best explained etymologically from the longer Syriac form, according to which it would mean 'friendship'. There is a certain fitness in the name, therefore, since the main theme

of the book is her devotion to her mother-in-law Naomi; but this etymology would not be obvious from the short Hebrew form of the name, nor is there any allusion to it in the book itself, so that upon these grounds alone, even apart from the more general argument from the historical character of the whole work, it is unlikely that the name was invented to suit the part.

The Book of Ruth tells of the devotion of a young Moabite widow to her Hebrew mother-in-law. Father von Hummelauer (p. 355) not unjustly assigns as the primary purpose of the book, *laus pietatis*. Because the heroine of the story is a Moabitess, it foreshadows to some extent the parable of the Good Samaritan, wherein the exclusive nationalism of the Jew is broken down by an unwilling tribute of admiration to the victory over the same prejudices in a hated neighbour. The book is also a standing protest, backed by magnificent example, against that enmity between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law which finds a root of jealousy in a common love that should rather be a sure proof against it. Such an enmity lies heavy upon so much of the world's literature that it was a worthy end of divine inspiration to provide a counterpoise. And behind all this is the worship of the true God, to which Ruth has been converted, and to which she remains true in clinging to her mother-in-law. There is thus a threefold lesson in the book which cannot fail to impress the thoughtful reader. In other ways also it is an edifying work, and gives us a better impression of Old Testament religion than does much in the Book of Judges, within the earliest period of which the story falls (*cf.* iv. 20, note). It reminds us to some extent of the beautiful Old Testament atmosphere of the first two chapters of St. Luke's gospel, the historical setting of which was likewise much troubled, and foreboded worse.

The story is told with all the simple and dramatic force of the Old Testament at its best, and is full of fragrant charm. The simplicity is seen, for example, in a certain fondness for repetition in the narrative, as in i. 6 ('the Fields of Moab'), 19 ('they reached Bethlehem'): ii. 5—6 ('the servant that

was set over the reapers'), 20 ('And Naomi said to her'): iii. 11—12 ('and now'): iv. 1—2 ('turn aside and sit down... And he turned aside and sat down'): and in the summary in i. 22. This repetition, however, is also used with effect by Naomi to bring out the tragedy of the position ('return ye' in i. 8, 11, 12, with i. 15: 'thy sister in law' in i. 15: 'call me not Naomi' in i. 20, 21) and by Ruth in her vehement answer of i. 16—17, where we see it conjoined to a compelling terseness, as in iii. 9. We see also a depth of feeling expressed in beautiful language in the praise wherewith Boaz justifies his kindness (ii. 11—12). It is indeed no small part of the charm of the story (as Père Joüon remarks, p. 12) that it is unfolded largely by letting the chief characters themselves speak their minds.

We may now briefly rehearse the narrative itself. Elimelech and his wife Naomi, together with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, had left Bethlehem by reason of a famine in the land, and had migrated to Moab. Misfortune begins with the death of Elimelech. The two sons take Moabite wives; but about ten years from their first coming to Moab, when the story opens, both the sons have died, and Naomi is left without husband or sons or grandchildren, but with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Hearing that the famine has now ceased, she determines to return to Bethlehem, where she still owns some property. It is evident that she was poor; the famine must have pressed hard upon them to make them leave Bethlehem, and later Ruth goes gleaning (ii. 2). We are told nothing of the life in Moab, but it must have been difficult to make Naomi resolve to return, though even in her case (as certainly in Ruth's: *cf.* p. xxxiii) the religious motive may have had something to do with it.

Naomi bids her daughters-in-law return home. It is clear that she loves them and they love her, but she is taking thought for their future. She is too old to marry again, and therefore will not be in a position to provide for them; in that ancient society, as in others, sufficient care and protection could only be found in a man. If they returned to their own people, they would find husbands who would look after

them. It is implied that if Naomi had more sons, they would discharge the duty of the levirate (Deut. xxv. 5—6) and marry her daughters-in-law; but she has none now, there is no hope of any, and even if there were hope, it would be too long to wait (i. 12—13).

This protest from Naomi determines Orpah's departure, although she had joined Ruth in a first refusal. But Ruth is quite resolved to remain with her mother-in-law; and it is this which is her supreme merit in the story. Without her, Naomi would be more or less helpless, as is sufficiently implied in i. 20—21, and chiefly because she was no longer of marriageable age; but if Ruth were with her the situation would be quite different. The next of kin, who would naturally be unwilling to marry Naomi, would have instead the right and duty of marrying Ruth, and Ruth he was not likely to decline. Her natural attractions, no less than her goodness, evidently appeal to Boaz; he declares that her worth is generally recognized (iii. 11), and commends her devotion to Naomi (ii. 11—12), but he is also moved to fervent praise and gratitude at her 'piety' in seeking out himself as the Goel rather than going after the young men (iii. 10). The implication is that the young men would be ready enough to have her.

When therefore Ruth was married by the next of kin, as she could expect to be, Naomi would be well provided for. The next of kin would be raising up seed to Ruth's dead husband, Mahlon (iv. 10); Ruth's eldest son by the next of kin would be reckoned her former husband's child, as in a levirate marriage, and therefore Naomi's grandchild. Hence it is not Boaz, upon whom Naomi would not have any such definite claim, but upon Obed, Ruth's son by Boaz, that the emphasis is laid by the Bethlehem women, who serve to some extent the purpose of a Greek chorus towards the end of the story; Obed, not Boaz, is the next of kin, and will prove the sustainer of Naomi's old age (iv. 15), although Boaz's kindly feeling towards Naomi is made abundantly clear (ii. 11—12: iii. 17). But the Bethlehem women (as has been said above) conclude with an emphatic refer-

ence to Ruth's devotion to her mother-in-law, upon which the whole story turns.

This devotion has also a strictly religious aspect, which is an essential feature in the story; Ruth has learnt from Naomi to worship the God of Israel, and in cleaving to her she is avoiding all danger of a return to idolatry. Naomi says that Orpah 'is returning unto her people and unto her God' (i. 15); Ruth answers, 'thy God shall be my God', and invokes Jehovah's punishments if she desert Naomi (i. 16—17). Boaz, too, prays that Jehovah may reward Ruth, 'the God of Israel, beneath whose wing thou art come to seek refuge' (ii. 12). Thus the natural bond which binds Ruth to Naomi is strongly reinforced by the desire to be faithful to their now common religion; in actual fact her refusal to forsake her mother-in-law is at the same time a refusal to forsake the true God.

There is much in this story that points to an early date both for the facts and for the writing of them, and very little that makes for a late date. The modern perspective in ancient history, and that not least in Palestine, makes the craze for later dating appear somewhat antiquated; at the time when the first draft of this introduction was being written, a writer in the *Revue Biblique* was placing the beginning of 'contemporary' history about four millenniums ago![1] The time of the judges was not so ancient, as we reckon ancient now; and it is not at all surprising that we should have some literary record of the period. At all events we may reasonably ask that the evidence for the date should be weighed impartially, and that the work should not be assigned the latest date possible that is not positively ridiculous —if indeed even that limit is always observed.[2]

[1] *Revue Biblique*, April, 1934, p. 259: 'Préhistorique en Palestine', by M. Neuville: *ad fin.*: 'Nous entrons ici dans l'Histoire, et même dans l'Histoire contemporaine; quatre millénaires sont bien peu de chose dans l'histoire de l'Homme et dans l'évolution de ses instincts'.

[2] I should like to mention, as perhaps a sign of a healthy reaction, the sane and scholarly article entitled 'The Book of Ruth', contributed by Mr. W. W. Cannon to *Theology* (June, 1928: vol. xvi, pp. 310—319). I discovered it too late to make more than a very slight use of it.

The very position of the Goel, such as it has been set forth above, is evidently a survival from early times; it has not yet come to be limited in actual practice to the law of the levirate. There is nothing to make us suppose that this latter received a wider expansion later on; such a hypothesis lacks antecedent probability, and finds no support in the evidence.

Again, the fact that the heroine of the book is of Moabite origin also makes for an early date; for the period of the judges was upon the whole a time of political and religious disintegration, when the objection to foreign wives was less likely to be felt. In order to make the book post-exilic, it has even been found necessary to suppose that it is a counterblast to the measures taken by Ezra and Nehemiah against such mixed marriages (Ezra ix—x: Neh. x. 30: xiii. 23—31), measures for which Malachy prepared the way (Mal. ii. 10—16: *cf.* Introd. in Westm. Vers., pp. xvii—xviii). 'It argues a singular lack of imagination and literary insight to treat the Book of Ruth as a counterblast or manifesto'. So writes Prof. G. A. Cooke (p. xiii), even while himself accepting the later date; and he quotes the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (col. 4172) to the same effect. The fresh and simple story is above suspicion of such sophisticated composition.

As a matter of fact the taking of Moabite wives does not seem to have been definitely forbidden; the Hebrews were not to marry the daughters of the previous inhabitants of Palestine, but the Moabites were not reckoned among these (*cf.* Exod. xxxiv. 11—16: Deut. vii. 1—3). A Moabite was not to be admitted to full membership of the Hebrew people, and the incident of Balaam was remembered against them: *cf.* Deut. xxxiii. 4—7 (3—6): Num. xxii—xxv. Nevertheless the strong measures of Ezra and Nehemiah, already referred to, went beyond the letter of the Mosaic Law. The targum (i. 4—5) blames the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion, and regards their early deaths as a divine punishment; but von Hummelauer (on i. 4) defends the marriages. St. Matthew in his genealogy appears to be mentioning of set purpose the four gentile women who were in

the direct line of Our Lord's ancestry (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba). A proper understanding of the duty of the Goel tends to place even Tamar's action in a more favourable light (*cf.* p. xxvi). In any case, of course, Ruth, the Moabite heroine of the book, would not be to blame for her original marriage with a Hebrew; and after her marriage and her adoption of the Hebrew religion (i. 16: ii. 12) her position would be totally different, and her faithfulness to Naomi is her supreme merit in the whole story (ii. 11: iv. 15).

An argument for the later date has also been drawn from the linguistic data, an argument here again presupposing a sophisticated and artificial manner of writing, quite alien to the work before us. Prof. S. R. Driver writes in his Introduction to the *Literature of the Old Testament* (ed. 7, p. 454) that 'the general Hebrew style (the idioms and the syntax) shows no marks of deterioration; it is palpably different, not merely from that of Esther and Chronicles, but even from Nehemiah's memoirs or Jonah, and stands on a level with the best parts of Samuel'. He then examines the linguistic traits alleged in favour of a late date; and it may be enough in general to refer the student to the considered opinion of so competent a Hebrew scholar. Especial stress may be laid on the remark that 'words with Aramaic or late Hebrew affinities occur, at least sporadically, in passages admittedly of early date' (*ibid.*, p. 455). Since, however, he considers that the form *lahen*, occurring twice in i. 13, 'is the word which it is most difficult to reconcile with an early date', it may be well to devote some special attention to it.[1] The very fact that it is the 'most difficult' points to its unique character, and should at least raise some suspicion against it.

This word is usually translated 'therefore', and put down as an Aramaism, since the same form is supposed to occur thrice in the Aramaic part of Daniel in this sense, *viz.*, in Dan. ii. 6, 9: iv. 24 (27); Prof. Cooke, for example, calls it 'a pure Aramaic word' (on Ruth i. 13). Even (as it

[1] See also on the word *Mara* in i. 20 the note *ad loc.*

would seem) upon this understanding, Driver (*loc. cit.*) is prepared to reconcile it with an early date, by suggesting that it may have been current dialectically in the northern kingdom. Some such explanation might, indeed, be possible, though it does seem a little odd to look for it in the north, seeing that the scene of the tale is Bethlehem. But the Aramaic origin of the word is itself open to doubt. The Oxford Hebrew Dictionary (*sub voce*) offers two explanations of it, the second the Aramaic one as above, but the first a purely Hebrew one, supposing *lahen* compounded of a preposition and a pronoun; a reference is given to the article on *hemmah*, which mentions this compound form towards the end. The meaning upon this explanation remains practically the same, 'therefore'.

Of this Hebrew-Aramaic *lahen* this verse (Ruth i. 13) would offer the only two examples; while against the purely Aramaic *lahen* there is a like fundamental objection, the doubt whether such a word can be supposed to exist.[1] There are in fact two *lahen's* given in the Biblical Aramaic part of the Oxford Hebrew Dictionary. For the first, which is rendered 'therefore', is quoted only Dan. ii. 6, 9: iv. 24: and in all these cases the meaning of the second *lahen* (conjunction: 'but', 'only', *etc.*) seems well in place. This appears to be especially obvious in the case of Dan. iv. 24 (27): 'this punishment has been determined, *but* righteousness and mercy may prolong thy prosperity'. Nevertheless it is here that the versions strongly support the meaning 'therefore', such being the rendering in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and

[1] Mr. G. R. Driver first pointed out to me how well founded this doubt is; for what follows here, however, I am alone responsible.

[While I was correcting the proofs of this work, Mr. Driver kindly forwarded to me an offprint of his contribution to *Miscellanea Orientalia, dedicata Antonio Deimel, annos LXX complenti*, Rome, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1935. See pp. 64-66 for his note on Ruth i. 13, where he agrees in the main with what is written in the text, but prefers to keep the reading *lahen* in the more certain Hebrew sense mentioned above, supposing it to be compounded of a preposition and a pronoun. He renders, 'for those things would ye tarry till they (*sc.* my still unborn sons) were grown? for those things would ye stay from having husbands?']

the Peshitta. In Dan. ii. 6, 9 we can render, 'nay, show (tell) me the dream': in the former passage we may understand, 'if you show the dream you shall have great rewards, *but* show the dream you must': in the latter, 'punishment awaits you, *but* all will be well if you tell the dream'. The Septuagint has πλήν ('nay') in ii. 6, and nothing at all in ii. 9; the Peshitta has 'only' in ii. 6, and 'but' in ii. 9. The Vulgate has 'therefore' in both places. The sense 'only' is found elsewhere for *lahen*; but the sense 'therefore' does not seem to occur for *lahen* even in non-biblical Aramaic. The case for a *lahen* meaning 'therefore' in biblical Aramaic is thus so weak that it appears safer to treat it as a mistake here, no less than in Hebrew.

In any case it seems likely that in Ruth i. 13 the word *lahen* is a wrong reading, and should be emended (with Père Joüon and others) to *lahem*; the change is a slight one, it removes a linguistic difficulty, it makes better sense, and is strongly supported. *Lahem* represents the dative preposition, 'to' or 'for', compounded with a pronoun which would indicate the possible sons as 'them', and this compound word from its position would be emphatic: 'For *them* would ye wait? For *them* would ye remain single?' This is the Septuagint reading, for which Brooke and McLean in the large Cambridge edition mention no Greek variant. So far as the first 'for them' is concerned, it is the reading of the Latin Vulgate, which then continues with a different text which does not admit of the appearance of a second 'for them'. The Syriac also gives the first 'for them' only, omitting both alternatives in the second part; the targum gives 'for them' in both places. Thus the important versions all reject *lahen*, and (with some small qualifications) favour *lahem*. Although it is possible that complete scientific justification was then wanting, the correct translation appears to be that of the Authorized Version: 'Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay for them from having husbands?'

These linguistic considerations may be concluded with some remarks from the late Prof. Gunkel's paper on *The*

Poetry of the Psalms, read before the Society for Old Testament Study at Oxford in September, 1927:

> We cannot always deduce a late origin from an Aramaic expression, for, as Hans Bauer and Leander maintain, Hebrew was from the beginning a mixed language, and possessed Aramaic words from the first. The task of distinguishing Aramaic words which are to be found in the most ancient texts from those which were not introduced till later times, is a problem for the future. In the meantime it is only with the greatest reservation that we should draw the conclusion of a late origin from Aramaisms.
>
> (*Old Testament Essays, etc.*, London, 1927, p. 119)

The Book of Ruth appears to have followed immediately the Book of Judges in the earliest arrangement of the books of Holy Writ, a fact which once more makes for an early date. Such is its place both in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate; and it is generally recognized that Josephus must be reckoning Ruth as one with Judges, and Lamentations as one with Jeremiah, when he speaks of twenty-two books of the Old Testament in his work against Apion (Bk. 1, chap. 8). The change to twenty-four books in IV Esdras xiv. 45[1] does not necessarily imply a change of order in the books, of which the first certain evidence appears to be St. Jerome's. In his *Prologus Galeatus* he at first implies that the Jews reckoned twenty-two books to the Old Testament canon, counting Ruth with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah. They reckoned but one Book of Samuel (in the Vulgate, I—II Kings), of Kings (III—IV Kings), of Chronicles (Paralipomena), of Ezra (or Esdras: II Esdras being also called Nehemiah), and of the twelve minor prophets. But later in the same *Prologus* he writes that some reckon Ruth and Lamentations among the *hagiographa*, the third and last division of the Hebrew Bible, coming after the Pentateuch and the 'Prophets', this last term being used in

[1] That is, in the text as edited by Charles in *The Ezra-Apocalypse* (London, 1912): see his note *ad loc.* He places the final redaction of the 'Ezra-Apocalypse' (IV Esdras iii—xiv: not the canonical book) about 120 A.D., or 'somewhat later' (p. xxxiii).

this connection in a very wide sense, covering Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Later again, in the preface to Daniel (in Hetzenauer's critical edition of the Vulgate, published at Innsbruck in 1906, p. xxix), he writes that the Jews reckon eleven books in the hagiographa, which would naturally imply that they included Ruth and Lamentations. The later Jewish evidence regarding the place of Ruth in the Hebrew canon may be seen (*e.g.*) in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, *s.v.* Bible Canon. Père Joüon, while not considering the matter important (p. 15), leaves open the question of the original place of Ruth in the canon (p. 17); nevertheless the Septuagint evidence is far earlier than any other, and the place after Judges does carry with it a presumption of greater antiquity. How the Book of Ruth came to lose that place, if it held it, can only be conjectured, but it seems possible that when it was definitely separated from Judges, it was felt incongruous to leave it in the second main division of the Bible under the title 'Prophets'.

It is a further example of the perverse treatment from which the book has suffered, that whereas the concluding genealogy ends with David, this has been seized upon as a proof, not that it was written in that reign, but that it came into being long afterwards, when David had become 'the king of later imagination and legend' (Cooke, p. xiv). Now, apart from the exigencies of the documentary hypothesis—a larger issue than can be discussed in this place—there is no valid reason for assuming that a genealogy cannot be early. The Semites appear always to have been fond of detailing their ancestry; King Hammurabi, for example, in his introduction to his code of laws calls himself 'the descendant of Sumulailu, the powerful son of Sinmu-ballit, the ancient seed of royalty'.[1] David's reign would naturally give rise to interest in his forbears, and a charming tale such as this would naturally find a permanent record. It may further be noted that his action in consigning his parents to the care of the king of Moab, as related in I Sam. (Kings) xxii. 3—4, is all the

[1] I quote Prof. Harpen's translation, as edited by Mr. Handcock for the S.P.C.K. (*Texts for Students*, no. 15).

easier to understand if it were known that he was partly of Moabite descent.

When full consideration has been given to all that has been said above, and the mountain of prejudice overcome that has arisen against early dates and reliable narratives, it will be found that the case in favour of the Book of Ruth is a strong one. To him who has not closed his eyes and stopped his ears the tale pleads its cause with a simplicity and grace that leave the book its own most effective advocate.

SUMMARY OF TEXT

CHAP. I: RUTH COMES TO BETHLEHEM.

The departure from Moab (1—7).
Ruth will not leave Naomi (8—18).
They arrive in Bethlehem (19—22).

CHAP. II: RUTH MEETS BOAZ.

Ruth goes gleaning (1—7).
The generosity of Boaz (8—16).
Ruth returns to Naomi (17—23).

CHAP. III: RUTH APPEALS TO BOAZ.

Naomi's counsel (1—5).
Ruth's appeal (6—13).
Ruth returns to Naomi (14—18).

CHAP. IV: THE MARRIAGE.

The kinsman (1—8).
Boaz claims Ruth (9—12).
The child (13—17).
The genealogy (18—22).

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Chap. I.

RUTH COMES TO BETHLEHEM

I.

The departure from Moab

And it came to pass in the days when 1
the judges ruled that there was a famine
in the land. And a certain man went
from Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn in the Fields
of Moab, himself and his wife and his two sons. The 2

I. 1—7. *The departure from Moab.* The events of the story belong to the time of the judges (i. 1), and in view of the genealogy (*cf.* iv. 20, note) must be placed very early within that period, perhaps in the 14th century B.C.; but much depends upon the date of the Exodus, which is too large and disputed a question for discussion here.

1. 'in the land,' probably meaning, 'in the land of Israel': so the targum. 'to sojourn,' *i.e.*, as an alien: the word cannot be taken to imply all the privileges in Moab that the 'sojourner' (*ger*) possessed in Israel (*cf.* Levit. xvii: Num. xv: *etc.*). 'Moab,' the country to the east of the Dead Sea and of the southernmost reaches of the Jordan, often mentioned in the Old Testament. 'the Fields of Moab,' an expression not used in Holy Writ in regard of any other country, probably signifies a particular part of Moab, the cultivated plateau: it also occurs in i. 2, 6, 22: ii. 6, and it is probably to be restored (by a change of a letter) in i. 6 (a second occurrence) and iv. 3. See Joüon, *ad loc.*, and for the geography (*e.g.*) Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, *s.v.* Moab.

2. 'Elimelech,' meaning 'God is king.' 'Naomi' (more correctly *No'omi*) perhaps means 'my sweet one,' which would explain the antithesis in i. 20, where see note. 'Mahlon' perhaps means 'sickly,' and 'Chilion' perhaps 'wasting away'; but in general the meanings of the names do not seem at all evident enough for them to have been given to suit the parts. *Cf.* ii. 1, note, on 'Boaz.' 'Ephrathites of Bethlehem.' The phrase might suggest that Ephrathah and Bethlehem are not quite the same, so that the former may here represent rather the district round the latter (Cooke). In Gen. xxxv. 19 and xlviii. 7, however, Ephrathah is simply said to be Bethlehem, nor does there seem to be sufficient ground either to reject the text or to suppose that any other place is meant, since Jacob was on his way southward to Hebron. Similarly in Ps. cxxxii

name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, all Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah; and they came to the Fields of Moab and
3 abode there. Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband,
4 died, leaving her with her two sons. And they took to themselves Moabite wives, the one Orpah by name and the other Ruth; and they dwelt there about ten
5 years. And both Mahlon and Chilion likewise died; and the woman was left without her two children and
6 without her husband. Then she arose with her daughters in law, and returned from the Fields of Moab; for she had heard in the Fields of Moab that Jehovah had regarded his people and given them
7 bread. So she went forth from the place where she

(cxxxi). 6 the ark might well pass near enough to Bethlehem on its way to Jerusalem. Again in iv. 11 Ephrathah is parallel to Bethlehem; it may be the older name, a view supported to some extent by some details of genealogy: *cf.* I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 19, 24, 50—51: iv. 4. One reason for its retention would be to distinguish this Bethlehem from that in Zebulun (Jos. xix. 15). The other references to Ephrathah are Gen. xxxv. 16: Mic. v. 1 (2). There is the further complication that 'Ephrathite' is used as the adjective of 'Ephraim' in Judg. xii. 5: I Sam. (Kings) i. 1: I (III) Kings xi. 26. But in I Sam. (Kings) xvii. 12 it is used with clear reference to Bethlehem, as here.

4. 'Orpah': the name may possibly signify 'obstinate,' but this is very uncertain. On 'Ruth,' *cf.* Introd., pp. xxix—xxx. Mahlon married Ruth (iv. 10), and was presumably the elder brother; in iv. 9 he is mentioned second, but doubtless because more about him is to follow. On these Moabite marriages, *cf.* Introd., pp. xxxiv—xxxv. There were no children, or they did not survive. 'they dwelt there,' *i.e.*, Naomi and her two sons had been there ten years when the latter both died.

5. The basis of the story: Naomi's desolation.

6. 'the Fields of Moab': *cf.* i. 1, note. The famine seems to have lasted 10 years (i. 1, 4). 'had regarded' rather than 'had visited': *cf.* Joüon, *ad loc.* The word for 'bread' (*lehem*, the 2nd element in Bethlehem, 'the house of bread') can be used of food generally, but is probably to be understood literally here.

7. 'to return': strictly true only of Naomi, who dominates the story.

had abode, and her two daughters in law with her, and they took the way to return unto the land of Judah.

Ruth will not leave Naomi

And Naomi said to her two daughters in 8
law, 'Go ye, return each of you to her mother's house. May Jehovah deal kindly with you, even as ye have dealt with the dead and with myself. May Jehovah grant you to find 9
a resting-place, each in the house of her husband'.

Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice and lamented. And they said, 'Nay, we will 10
return with thee unto thy people'.

But Naomi said, 'Return ye, my daughters; why 11
would ye go with me? Have I yet sons in my

'the land of Judah,' meaning the tribal territory, in which Bethlehem was situated.

8—18. *Ruth will not leave Naomi.* This is the crisis in the story, which tells how her brave affection was rewarded.

8. 'to her mother's house.' Ruth's father was still alive (ii. 11), but the widowed daughter would naturally remain at her mother's side; the mention of the mother's house may also be due to the prevalence of polygamy. Naomi prays that Jehovah may requite kindness with kindness: *cf.* Ps. xviii. 25 (xvii. 26). 'with the dead' in the plural, their two husbands. Orpah also is praised, and doubtless would have returned with Naomi, if the latter had not dissuaded her.

9. Naomi prays that Jehovah may provide for them by a second marriage. 'a resting-place,' here a feminine noun; the masculine form is used in iii. 1 with the same meaning and implication.

10. They could provide for themselves, but this would leave Naomi forlorn. The question of religion does not appear explicitly till i. 15. 'Nay,' with the change of a letter (in place of 'to her,' after 'said') seems to be preferable for grammatical reasons: *cf.* Joüon, *ad loc.*

11—13. Naomi is referring to the levirate law; her daughters-in-law cannot expect any sons of hers, either by Elimelech or by a second husband, to discharge this duty towards them (*cf.* Introd., pp. xxiii, xxiv, xxviii, xxxii). She is thus pointing out that she cannot hope to provide for their widowhood in the usual way. She does not touch on the bearing of her words on her own case; in this she shows herself unselfish. If the young widows came back with her, they could expect to be married by

12 womb, to be your husbands? Return ye, my
daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a
husband. If I should say, I have hope: if I should
even have a husband this night: if I should even
13 bear sons: would ye wait for them, till they were
grown? Would ye refrain for them from having
husbands? Do not so, my daughters; I am sorely
grieved on your account, because the hand of Jehovah
hath gone forth against me'.

14 Again they lifted up their voice and lamented.
And Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave
15 to her. And Naomi said, 'Behold, thy sister in law

Goels, and Naomi would thus acquire effective Goels likewise; and this is what actually happened as a result of Ruth's faithfulness. But if Naomi went back alone, too old to wed, she could have little hope of succour. Ruth's proposal to go gleaning (ii. 2), and Naomi's joy at the result of it (ii. 19) show that they were quite poor. The repeated 'return ye' in i. 11—12 has tragic emphasis: *cf.* Introd., p. xxxi.

13. 'for them,' twice: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxxv—xxxviii. 'I am sore grieved on your account,' because I cannot provide for you. The Revised Version margin ('it is far more bitter for me than for you') is possible Hebrew, but is contrary to the context and to Naomi's unselfish character; Père Joüon's rendering ('je suis beaucoup trop malheureuse pour vous': my lot is too sad for you to share it, I am the object of Jehovah's wrath and as such destined to misfortune) seems to read more into the Hebrew words than they will bear.

14. 'kissed her mother in law,' and (it is implied) took leave of her. The versions fill out the phrase (Vulgate, 'and returned': Peshitta, 'and returned and departed': LXX, 'and returned to her own people'), but this was to be expected in the case of such a pregnant expression, and the targum (usually so free in its additions) supports M.T. in adding nothing further.

15. 'return thou.' The 'thou' is not expressed separately in M.T. Here also the style is pregnant; the LXX and Peshitta render, 'return thou also'; but the Vulgate and targum support M.T., although the targum expands the end of the verse. 'her god': the religious issue here appears for the first time: *cf.* Introd., p. xxxiii: i. 10, note. Naomi had it in mind, and now hints at it, even while inviting Ruth to depart also. In the next two verses Ruth emphatically declares her belief in Jehovah. The god of Moab was Chemosh: *cf.* Num. xxi. 29: Judg. xi. 24: I (III) Kings xi. 7, 33: Jerem. xlviii. 7, 13, 46. Chemosh is also

is returning unto her people and unto her god; return thou after thy sister in law'.

But Ruth said, 'Press me not to forsake thee, to 16
return from following thee: for wither thou goest
I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy
people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my
God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be 17
buried. Thus may Jehovah do to me, and worse
also, if aught but death part thee and me'.

And when she saw that she was determined to go 18
with her, she said no more to her.

They arrive in Bethlehem

So they two went on until they reached 19
Bethlehem. And it befell, when they
reached Bethlehem, that the whole city
was stirred in their regard; and the women said, 'Is
this Naomi?'

mentioned in the famous Moabite Stone, of about the 9th century B.C. Naomi herself believed that Jehovah was supreme also in Moab: *cf.* i. 8—9.

16. Ruth's terse and striking answer (*cf.* Introd., p. xxxi) is ruined by the targum, wherein Naomi interrupts six times with the mention of mosaic or rabbinical regulations as possible deterrents. Later also it lays stress upon her becoming a proselyte.

17. *lit.*, 'Thus may Jehovah do to me, and thus add (or, multiply), that death shall part between me and between thee.' The first part is an imprecation; the 'thus' may have been accompanied, at all events originally, by an expressive gesture. Some think that it 'probably referred originally to the pieces of the sacrifice over which the oath was taken' (Kennedy, *ad loc.*): *cf.* Jerem. xxxiv. 18—19: Gen. xv. 10, 17. 'and so add' or multiply, *i.e.*, increase the evil just indicated. The expression had come to be felt as an oath, and the construction follows the sense ('I swear *that*') as in I Sam. (Kings) xiv. 44: II Sam. (Kings) iii. 9: I (III) Kings ii. 23: and (of false gods) I (III) Kings xix. 2. 'that death shall part,' with 'death' first for emphasis, contrary to the usual order, because used pregnantly for 'only death,' as in Gen. xxxii. 11 (10), 'with my staff,' *i.e.*, 'with only my staff': for other examples *cf.* Joüon, *ad loc.* *Lit.*, 'part between me and between thee': English omits the double preposition.

19—22. *They arrive in Bethlehem.*

19. On the repetition in this verse ('they reached Bethlehem') see

20 And she said to them, 'Call me not Naomi, call me
Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with
21 me. I went forth full, but Jehovah hath brought

Introd., p. xxx. 'was stirred,' or, as we might say, 'rang with the news': the verb is that used in I Sam. (Kings) iv. 5 ('the earth rang again'): I (III) Kings i. 45 ('the city rang again'). 'the women': omitted in the Hebrew, but the verb is in the feminine. It is a graphic touch: the women would be more interested, and the men would be mostly in the fields. 'Is this Naomi?' The question is rhetorical, expressing not ignorance, but astonishment, as is clear from the next line: *cf.* Lam. ii. 15. Naomi had been away ten years (*cf.* i. 4, with note), and misfortune may also have left its traces upon her.

20. There is a play on the name 'Naomi,' which (as mentioned in i. 2, note) appears to mean 'my sweet one,' and in any case could be connected (as here) with such a meaning, from the similarity of the words. 'Mara' means 'bitter,' and the following verb, 'hath dealt bitterly,' is from the same root. 'Mara' as it stands has the Aramaic feminine termination (*'aleph*, not the Hebrew *he*). Kennedy compares the substitution of *'aleph* for *he* in Ps. cxxvii (cxxvi). 2, apparently meaning to imply that a similar slip has been made here. The Jews were familiar with Aramaic even before the exile (6th cent. B.C.), and after the exile came to speak it as their own language, so that a mistake of this kind is not difficult to understand. Examples of the same interchange, but in Aramaic, will be found in my note, 'Sovereignty and Realm in Dan. ii. 44' in *Biblica*, vol. iv (1923), pp. 91—94. But Joüon (*ad loc.*: *cf.* p. 18), while rejecting the *'aleph*, prefers to emend to a *yodh*, the 1st person sing. possessive suffix, which would give 'my bitter one' in better antithesis to 'my sweet one.' (In actual fact he takes both words as abstract nouns, *ma suavité* and *mon amertume*, but this seems less good.) 'the Almighty' for *Shaddai*, which is generally so rendered, though the meaning and etymology are somewhat uncertain. With 'God' (*'El*) prefixed it occurs in the Pentateuch (Gen. xvii. 1, *etc.*), and without it chiefly in Job: *cf.* Job xxvii. 2, which contains a parallel to the expression here. The word would be familiar, but somewhat poetic, and thus in keeping with Naomi's lament; it may also be used of the severe aspect of the Godhead (Joüon).

21. 'full,' alluding especially to her husband and two sons; even then the family must have been poor: *cf.* Introd., p. xxxi. 'Why do ye call me Naomi?' On the repetition (from 'call me not Naomi' in i. 20) *cf.* Introd., p. xxxi. 'hath afflicted me,' after the Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac texts, which agree with the M.T. letters, but understand them differently from the M.T. pointing, which requires the translation, 'hath testified against me.' This, however, does not yield such good parallelism with what follows. The difficulty against the translation here accepted is the presence of a preposition not elsewhere used with the verb; hence Joüon changes a letter of the verb and renders, 'hath acted against me.'

me back empty. Why do ye call me Naomi, seeing that Jehovah hath afflicted me, and that the Almighty hath brought evil upon me?'

Thus did Naomi return, and with her Ruth the 22
Moabitess, her daughter in law, who returned from the Fields of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Chap. II.

RUTH MEETS BOAZ

II.

Ruth goes gleaning

Now there was a relative of Naomi's 1
husband, a man of substance of the clan of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.
And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Let me go, 2

22. The summary is in keeping with a tendency to repetition in the narrative (*cf.* Introd., pp. xxx—xxxi); taken with the detail of the time of arrival (April: *cf.* ii. 23, note) it concludes the introduction, and finally sets the scene for the main story, wherein the harvest plays a large part. 'who returned from the Fields of Moab': the clause seems superfluous, and may come from ii. 6: iv. 3. 'Fields of Moab': *cf.* i. 1, note.

II. 1—7. *Ruth goes gleaning.* She endeavours to provide for their poverty.

1. 'a relative of Naomi's husband': the point is important, because it is his relationship to the husband which makes Boaz the Goel. Evidently he was not Elimelech's brother, or the narrative would simply have said so. 'a man of substance': the same word is used in iv. 11 ('do thou prosper'): *cf.* I Sam. (Kings) ix. 1, *etc.* But it also appears to imply moral worth, such as would draw down upon itself Jehovah's blessing, of which this agricultural prosperity would be the sign; hence it is used of moral worth alone in iii. 11: *cf.* Exod. xviii. 21, *etc.* 'Boaz.' The meaning is uncertain, BDB. incline to derive the word from a root perhaps indicating swiftness. Cooke thinks that it may be a contraction of a longer word meaning 'Ba'al is strong,' the name having become traditional, so that its (presumably) pagan origin was forgotten. In M.T. it is the same name as that of one of the pillars set up before the Temple: *cf.* I (III) Kings vii. 21: II Chron. (Paral.) iii. 17. Hence some find a symbolic meaning in the name, 'in him is strength,' *i.e.*, for Ruth. But this is an unlikely form of compound name for Boaz, and also for the pillar, which more probably bore the simpler name, 'in strength': *cf.* BDB. For his parentage and date, *cf.* iv. 20, note.

2. A widow was entitled to glean: *cf.* Deut. xxiv. 19. Evidently she

prithee, to the fields, that I may glean among the ears of corn after him in whose eyes I may find favour'.

And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter'.

3 So she went and gleaned in the fields after the reapers; and it befell her to light upon the plot of land belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of
4 Elimelech. And behold, Boaz was coming from Bethlehem, and he said to the reapers, 'Jehovah be with you!'

And they answered him, 'Jehovah bless thee!'

5 And Boaz said to his servant that was set over the reapers, 'What girl is this?'

6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, 'She is the Moabite girl who re-
7 turned with Naomi from the Fields of Moab. And

would be supposed to be in need, as Ruth and Naomi doubtless were: *cf.* Levit. xix. 9—10: xxiii. 22: Ruth i. 11—13, note: Introd., p. xxxi. She would hardly be able to do so without the goodwill of the owner: *cf.* ii. 9, 15—16. 'after him.' Ruth apparently expects the owner to be reaping himself; she was not expecting to find a man of Boaz's position.

3. Keats in his *Ode to a Nightingale* writes of 'the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home, she stood in tears amid the alien corn': sad of heart, no doubt, but hardly 'sick for home' or 'in tears.' She worked strenuously (ii. 7). Naomi attributes all this good fortune to Jehovah (ii. 20), as she had attributed to Him her previous fortune (i. 20—21); in both respects she may be taken to represent the mind of the author. Boaz owned several fields (ii. 8—9).

4. 'from Bethlehem,' which was probably some distance away: *cf.* ii. 18, note. With a simple vivid touch the author depicts the piety of Boaz and his retainers. 'Jehovah be with you': 'the Lord be with you,' as the Vulgate and Septuagint render it, substituting 'Lord' as usual for the Divine name. This passage is presumably the origin of the liturgical salutation: *cf.* Judg. vi. 12: Ps. cxxix (cxxviii). 8.

5. 'What girl,' *lit.*, 'whose girl.' Elsewhere (*i.e.*, in ii. 8, 22, 23: iii. 2) the Hebrew word is rendered 'maiden,' and would usually imply one not married; but here (unwittingly) and in ii. 6 and in iv. 12 (not elsewhere in O.T.) it is applied to a young widow, Ruth.

6. 'Fields of Moab': *cf.* i. 1, note. 'the servant,' *etc.*: on the repetition, *cf.* Introd., pp. xxx—xxxi.

7. 'Her dwelling in her present home hath been but short.' Any

she said, "Let me glean, prithee, and gather among the sheaves after the reapers". So she came, and hath remained from time of morning even until now. Her dwelling in her present home hath been but short'.

The generosity of Boaz

Then said Boaz to Ruth, 'Hear me, my 8
daughter: go not to glean in any other field, neither depart thou hence, but cleave here to my maidens. Let thine eyes be upon 9

translation of the Hebrew text here must be very uncertain. The advantage of the new attempt here made is that it follows the M.T. without change. The words would give further information about Ruth, and it would be their lack of connection with those immediately preceding which would have perplexed translators and commentators. Otherwise we may render, but with changes of the text, 'she hath not rested at home (or, at the house) for a moment,' *i.e.*, she has not gone home (*lit.*, 'to the house,' possibly some barn or other building nearer at hand) even for a moment's rest. 'among the sheaves' seems here to be a vague expression for the 'bundles' of ii. 16: *cf.* ii. 15—16, with notes. We may suppose Boaz to arrive (ii. 4) not long before the lunch hour, about midday (ii. 14), and Ruth would have been gleaning behind the reapers since dawn, and she continued until dusk (ii. 17) when all would depart home for the evening meal.

8—16. *The generosity of Boaz.* Boaz here takes the initiative. He is a relative of Elimelech, and knows all. He calls Ruth 'my daughter' (ii. 8: iii. 10: *cf.* ii. 5), implying a disparity of age, which evidently holds him back; but when the advance comes from Ruth in spite of this, he welcomes it eagerly (iii. 10).

8. 'Hear me,' *lit.*, 'Hearest thou not?' This verse contains a direction for the present, to remain in the field where they are; in the next verse she is bidden likewise to follow the reapers when Boaz's other fields are being reaped. 'my maidens,' probably so called because belonging to the families of his retainers, and therefore accustomed to glean in his fields (*cf.* ii. 23). Some think that the maidens did the binding, but this is difficult to reconcile with ii. 16; it is more likely that the reapers did it themselves, as they may still be seen doing today (*cf.* Joüon on ii. 16).

9. Although she would be entitled to glean, Ruth was well aware that any proprietor would find it easy to stop her (*cf.* ii. 2, with note), and might do so the more easily because she was a foreigner (ii. 10). In the same way the reapers might object to a newcomer; but Boaz forestalls this (*cf.* ii. 15). There does not seem to be primarily question of safeguarding her against personal liberties by the lads.

the field which is being reaped, and follow them; have I not commanded the lads not to touch thee? And shouldst thou be thirsty, thou shalt go to the vessels and drink of what the lads draw'.

10 Then she fell upon her face and prostrated herself to the ground, and she said to him, 'Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou shouldst have regard to me, seeing that I am a foreigner?'

11 And Boaz answered and said to her, 'Verily all hath been told me which thou hast done for thy mother in law since the death of thy husband: how thou hast left thy father and thy mother and the land of thy birth, and art come unto a people which a day
12 or two ago thou knewest not. May Jehovah reward thy deed, and may a full recompense be thine from Jehovah, the God of Israel, beneath whose wings thou art come for shelter!'

13 Then she said, 'May I find favour in thine eyes,

10. 'have regard to . . . foreigner.' The words are so similar that there may be an intentional play on them, as though they suggested of themselves that regard *should* be had to a foreigner (*cf.* Joüon, *ad loc.*, and p. 12). Boaz's kindness would be an immense relief to Ruth, and excite her lively gratitude.

11. Boaz answers with enthusiastic praise, showing that his favour to her is well grounded; perhaps also, to judge from his no less enthusiastic answer in iii. 10, we should see in his reply the beginning of love.

12. 'beneath whose wings.' The figure may be that of an eagle (*cf.* Deut. xxxii. 11), or perhaps (Joüon) may be taken from the protective wings of some Egyptian deities, or from those of the cherubim over the ark: *cf.* Exod. xxv. 20: I (III) Kings vi. 27: viii. 6. The figure recurs in Ps. xxxvi. 7 (xxxv. 8): lvii. 1 (lvi. 2): xci (xc). 4: see also Ruth iii. 9, with note. The prayer is to be answered through Boaz himself; there is a similar dramatic touch in ii. 19. He brings out strongly the religious significance of Ruth's action: *cf.* Introd., p. xxxiii.

13. 'May I find favour in thine eyes,' *i.e.*, always: an expression of thanks to a superior, as in I Sam. (Kings) i. 18: II Sam. (Kings) xvi. 4: *cf.* Esth. viii. 5. 'hast spoken kindly to,' *lit.*, 'hast spoken to the heart of,' implying effective encouragement, as in Gen. l. 21: Isai. xl. 2: *etc.*

my lord; for thou hast comforted me, and hast spoken kindly to thy handmaid, though I am not as one of thine own handmaidens'.

And at meal-time Boaz said to her, 'Come hither, 14
and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar'.

So she sat beside the reapers, and he handed to her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and left some over. And when she arose to glean, Boaz gave 15
orders to his lads, saying, 'Let her glean even between the sheaves, and shame her not; nay, draw the 16
stalks out freely for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and rebuke her not'.

14. 'at meal-time': *cf.* ii. 7, note, *ad fin.* 'vinegar,' *i.e.*, sour wine (*vin-aigre*), still used in Palestine as a refreshing drink. 'roasted grain,' *i.e.*, grains taken from the newly reaped barley, roasted in a pan, and eaten with bread, or as a substitute for bread: *cf.* I Sam. (Kings) xxv. 18: II Sam. (Kings) xvii. 28. Père Joüon refers to Edward Robinson being offered roasted corn by the harvesters in 1838, a food then in common use at that time of the year. 'left some over,' which she took home at the end of the day's work: *cf.* ii. 18, with note.

15. 'between the sheaves,' probably meaning, where these were still being made into the 'bundles' of ii. 16. The gleaners would not usually be allowed so far up, because it would then be comparatively easy for them to take what should have gone into the 'bundles.' Then, as now (*cf.* Père Jaussen's *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, p. 255, quoted by Joüon on ii. 7), it was doubtless necessary to hold back the gleaners: the reapers would naturally object to Ruth coming so far forward: *cf.* ii. 9, note. 'shame.' The root-meaning of this word seems to be to 'humiliate'; here it means to humiliate by blaming the course being pursued, as in Job xi. 3.

16. See preceding note. 'the stalks': not in the Hebrew, but inserted for clearness. 'draw ... out ... from the bundles' when tied: *cf.* ii. 8, note. The gleaners would be allowed freely among the tied bundles; but the reapers were to take care that there was plenty to glean wherever Ruth came. This was a still further act of generosity. For 'bundles' Kennedy understands 'the handfuls of ears, gathered in the reaper's left hand while reaping with the sickle, several such handfuls making a sheaf.'

17 So she gleaned in the field until even-
Ruth returns to Naomi
ing, and beat out what she had gleaned,
and it was about a bushel of barley.
18 Then she took it up and went into the city, and
showed her mother in law what she had gleaned, and
brought forth and gave to her what had been left
19 over when she was satisfied. And her mother in law
said to her, 'Where hast thou gleaned today? Where
hast thou worked? Blessed be he that had regard to
thee!'

Then she told her mother in law with whom she had worked, saying, 'The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz'.

20 And Naomi said to her daughter in law, 'Blessed

17—23. *Ruth returns to Naomi.* Naomi quickly realizes the significance of Boaz's favour (ii. 20), but waits till all the gleaning is over for the situation to mature (ii. 23) before taking action (iii. 1—4).

17. 'beat out' the grain from the ears with a stick, as was done to small quantities (*cf.* Judg. vi. 11): not the same as threshing on an open floor. 'bushel,' about the equivalent of the Hebrew *ephah*, here used, which itself appears to be a loan-word of Egyptian origin. It was a large amount for a day's gleaning (*cf.* ii. 19).

18. We are not told the distance from the field to the house, but we may infer that it was considerable from the fact that Naomi takes it for granted (*cf.* iii. 4, 7) that Boaz will spend the night at the threshing-floor, which presumably was near his fields. Perhaps this was partly intended to protect the grain, but to sleep there would not be very effective for the purpose. Ruth shows Naomi her gleanings, but gives her to eat of the roast grain which she had saved over from her lunch: *cf.* ii. 14, with note.

19. Naomi calls down a blessing on Boaz even before she knows his name or any details, a dramatic touch similar to that in ii. 12. The large amount brought back by Ruth (*cf.* ii. 17, with note) showed that she must have met with especial kindness. Naomi and Ruth were evidently poor: *cf.* i. 11—13, note.

20. 'And Naomi said to her.' The repetition (*cf.* Introd., pp. xxx—xxxi) serves to emphasize the importance of the following words, which indicate the fact upon which much of the plot turns. 'kinsman,' used in the sense explained in Introd., p. xv, and implying the duties explained in Introd., chap. 2; it signifies a closer relationship than the word 'related.'

be he of Jehovah, who hath not left off his kindness to the living or the dead!'

And Naomi said to her, 'The man is related to us; he is a kinsman of ours'.

And Ruth the Moabitess said, 'Moreover he said 21
to me, Thou shalt cleave to my lads until they shall have finished all my harvesting'.

Then said Naomi to Ruth her daughter in law, 'It 22
is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, and that thou be not found in any other field'.

So she clave to the maidens of Boaz in gleaning 23
until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were finished; and she dwelt with her mother in law.

Naomi does not say that he is *the* kinsman, being probably aware that there was a nearer one (iii. 12); but from her mention of Jehovah's kindness to the *dead* she clearly feels confident now that the kinsman's duty will be discharged. She appears also to be confident, as indeed does Boaz himself (iii. 10—13) and Ruth (iii. 5, 9), that in actual fact it will be left to him to discharge this duty (iii. 1—4, 18); probably they knew that the nearer kinsman could not afford to do so (iv. 6). Both 'living' and 'dead' are in the plural; the former word indicates Naomi and Ruth, the latter (at all events chiefly) their two husbands, Elimelech and Mahlon (*cf.* iv. 5, with note, *ad fin.*: Introd., p. xxxii).

21. In the Hebrew 'lads' is the masculine of 'maidens' (used in ii. 22, *etc.*) and in view of Boaz's words in ii. 8—9 may be meant to include both sexes; still, Ruth may be thinking only of her own gleaning, while Boaz and Naomi (ii. 22) are thinking of those in whose company she would be working.

22. 'found,' probably without any implication of a hostile encounter: *cf.* ii. 9, note. Boaz should not find that she had disregarded his kindness.

23. 'and she dwelt with,' or possibly (with the Vulgate and some MSS.) 'she returned to': this would involve a change of only one letter, though it runs counter to the massoretic pointing. The barley harvest might be expected to begin in April, and the wheat harvest follows at an interval of about three weeks. The precise date depends chiefly on the time and abundance of the winter rains. See (*e.g.*) Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible*, *s.v.* Barley, Wheat. The whole harvest season normally lasted about seven weeks: *cf.* Deut. xvi. 9: Exod. xxxiv. 22: *etc.* See also Acts ii. 1, note. Barley and wheat were probably threshed and winnowed together, but the barley first (iii. 2).

Chap. III.

RUTH APPEALS TO BOAZ

III. 1 Naomi's counsel

And Naomi her mother in law said to her, 'My daughter, must I not seek thee a resting-place, in order that it may be 2 well with thee? And now, is not Boaz, with whose maidens thou wast, our relative? Behold, he is winnowing his barley tonight in the threshing-floor. 3 Wash and anoint thyself, therefore, and put thy

III. 1—5. *Naomi's counsel.* The best way in which Ruth could help Naomi, as well as herself, was to marry one who would take care of both of them; but Naomi would be much surer of help if Ruth married the Goel: see more especially Introd., p. xxv. One had now been found who would be ready to discharge the Goel's duty, and to whom it would probably fall in actual fact to do so: *cf.* ii. 20, note. Both Naomi and Ruth must have had a second marriage for Ruth in their mind from the outset; Naomi had doubtless come to know Boaz's mind, and thought that he would welcome some encouragement: *cf.* iii. 10, 17, 18.

1. 'resting-place': *cf.* i. 9, with note.

2. 'our relative,' *lit.*, 'our relationship,' *i.e.*, '(of) our relationship,' the abstract term, the corresponding concrete term being used in ii. 1; but 'related' in ii. 20 is not connected with these, nor any of the three connected with *Goel*, 'kinsman.' The threshing came first, and consisted in dragging a board, especially roughened, or else a more elaborate 'threshing-wagon,' over the corn, so as to loosen the grain from the husks. The 'winnowing' consisted of throwing up the mingled stalks and chaff and grain with a fork or shovel against the wind, when the grain would fall to the ground and the rest be blown away: *cf.* Matt. iii. 12: Luke iii. 17. For this purpose the evening would serve best, when the breeze (mentioned here in the targum) would be blowing from the sea till about sunset; the word 'tonight' seems to be used loosely for this earlier time, unless Naomi is thinking of all that is to follow.

3. 'mantle': so the letter-text, which M.T. would emend to the plural, 'garments'; but this does not suit the words 'put upon thee' so well, nor is it likely that Ruth in her poverty would possess 'best clothes,' which indeed the Hebrew does not here indicate. It is more probable that the usual large outer garment is meant, in which she could more easily escape notice as directed, the 'cloak' of iii. 15 (so Joüon). 'go down,' and similarly 'went down' in iii. 6; in iv. 1 Boaz 'went up' in the contrary direction from the threshing-floor to the city. Bethlehem

mantle upon thee, and go down unto the threshing-floor; yet make not thyself known to the man until he shall have finished eating and drinking. But when 4
he lieth down, thou shalt mark the place where he lieth, and shalt come and uncover his feet, and lie down there; and himself will tell thee what thou art to do'.

And Ruth said to her, 'All that thou shalt tell me 5
I will do'.

Ruth's appeal

So she went down unto the threshing- 6
floor and did according to all that her mother in law had bidden her. Now 7
when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was

gives the appearance of an amphitheatre facing the north-east, with a hill at each end and a short saddle connecting them; the threshing-floor was presumably at the bottom, and the town on the lower slopes of the half-circle above it..

4. 'uncover his feet,' *lit.*, 'the-place-of-his-feet,' a single word, used also in iii. 7, 8. The large 'mantle' of iii. 3 was worn by both sexes, and would be thrown over the feet when lying down; Ruth would throw it back and uncover Boaz's feet, but without disturbing the inner tunic. Boaz would thus be awoken by his feet feeling the cold (*cf.* iii. 8, with note); but the action in itself is symbolic, suggesting that the mantle should cover Ruth as well, and thus preparing the way for her words in iii. 9. To throw the mantle over a woman would be to claim her for wife; *cf.* Introd., pp. xxi, xxiii.

5. A regular formula of obedience or compliance, properly referring to future instructions, though used primarily here and in iii. 11 in regard of words already uttered, doubtless to indicate a general attitude of compliance. *Cf.* II Sam. (Kings) ix. 11: II (IV) Kings x. 5.

6—13. *Ruth's appeal.* Upon the precise nature of the claim upon which this appeal was founded, see especially Introd., pp. xxv—xxix: ii. 20, note. Ruth was obeying Naomi's instructions (iii. 5—6), but that of course would not of itself altogether excuse her if the act were wrong. Catholic commentators do as a matter of fact nearly all excuse her, but not all upon the same grounds (*cf.* Hummelauer on iii. 7). No one would recommend her conduct for modern imitation, and indeed Boaz himself did not wish her action to become known (iii. 14); but there is no sign that he thought it blameworthy, on the contrary, he praises both the action and herself, and calls down Jehovah's blessing upon her for it

glad, he went to lie down at the end of the corn-heap; and she came softly and uncovered his feet and lay
8 down. And about midnight it came to pass that the man gave a shiver and looked about him, and lo, a
9 woman was lying at his feet. And he said, 'Who art thou?'

And she said, 'I am Ruth, thy handmaid; spread therefore thy robe over thy handmaid, for thou art a kinsman'.

10 And he said, 'Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my

(iii. 10—11), and evidently the author of the book shares his sentiments. It is by the standards of such as they that we must endeavour to judge of the matter; the Old Testament is full of symbolic action, and it would seem natural that it should accompany such an appeal. Naomi was too sure of their virtue and mutual respect to fear any evil. It may be noted that the simple narration of such an incident, thus left unjustified except by Boaz's words (iii. 10—11), itself makes against a late date, and offers a contrast (*e.g.*) to the more elaborate book of Judith, with its ample defence of the heroine.

6. The verse anticipates to some extent what follows. We may suppose that Naomi had given rather fuller instructions than what is contained in iii. 3—4.

7. 'the corn-heap,' *i.e.*, of barleycorns, threshed and winnowed, as appears here from iii. 15. The threshing-floor was probably some distance from Boaz's house: *cf.* ii. 18, note. 'softly' seems better than 'secretly,' in the light of Joüon's discussion of the etymology.

8. 'gave a shiver,' feeling the cold in his feet and thus awaking, 'and looked about him.' The translation follows Joüon, but is uncertain; Dr. Moffatt, for instance, renders, 'started up and bent forward.'

9. 'robe,' *lit.*, 'wing,' whence it comes to mean (as here) the corner or extremity of a garment. In the Hebrew the sense of 'wing,' with all that it might imply (*cf.* ii. 12, with note) would doubtless still be felt. On the significance of 'spreading the robe' over a woman, see Introd., pp. xxi—xxiii: for the words, 'spread therefore thy robe over thy handmaid,' the targum substitutes the words, 'and let thy name be called upon (*i.e.*, applied to) thy handmaid, by thy taking me for wife.' On the 'kinsman' or Goel, see especially Introd., chap. 2.

10. The main theme of the Book of Ruth, as Father von Hummelauer has well said, is the *laus pietatis*: *cf.* Introd., p. xxx. Ruth has shown her piety or dutifulness, in the first place by returning with her mother-in-law from Moab, and in the second place by seeking a husband where true 'piety' demanded, in the person of the kinsman, rather than in 'the

daughter; this thy latter piety surpasseth the former, in that thou hast not gone after the young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear 11
not: all that thou shalt tell me I will do for thee: for all the people of my town know thee for a woman of worth. And now it is true that I am a kinsman; 12
nevertheless there is a kinsman nearer than myself. Tarry here this night, and in the morning, if he will 13
redeem thee, well and good, let him do so; but if he is unwilling, as Jehovah liveth, myself will redeem thee: lie down until the morning'.

young men,' towards whom she might feel a greater natural attraction. In this way she is showing a proper regard for the claims of her dead husband's kin, not only as regards Naomi, but also in respect of Elimelech and Mahlon (*cf.* ii. 20, with note), and Boaz himself. See especially Introd., pp. xxiv—xxvi.

11. 'all that thou shalt tell me': *cf.* iii. 5, with note. 'all the people of my town,' *lit.* 'all the gate of my people,' the gate being the chief place of resort for conversation and business, as well as for the administration of justice: *cf.* iv. 1, 10, 11: Gen. xxiii. 10: xxxiv. 20: Job xxix. 7: Prov. xxxi. 23: *etc.* 'of worth,' *i.e.*, moral worth: *cf.* ii. 1, note, *ad init.* The word cannot mean material prosperity here, since Ruth was certainly poor, nor would Boaz speak to her in this way; he is giving a better reason than that for being willing and glad to have her. Still less of course is he offering any excuse for her present action, in which he evidently sees nothing amiss.

12. Boaz mentions that another has a better right to act as Goel; nevertheless he does not seem to have much doubt that in actual fact the duty will be left to himself: *cf.* ii. 20, note.

13. 'redeem thee' (twice), *i.e.*, 'acquire thee as Goel,' the verb corresponding to 'Goel' being used (*cf.* iv. 4, with note): in the concrete, 'wed thee as thy Goel.' In the Hebrew the verb is used four times in this verse, being also rendered 'let him do so,' and being omitted after 'if he is unwilling,' *i.e.*, 'to redeem thee.' If, as may be supposed, the threshing-floor was some distance from the town (*cf.* ii. 18, note), Boaz would be consulting Ruth's safety and good name by keeping her with him till early dawn (iii. 14); he would also be making it all the more certain to herself and Naomi that her petition was granted. He may have performed the symbolic act for which she asked, but thereupon would need and use all his mantle for himself, while she remained wrapped up in hers.

14 So she lay at his feet until the morning,
Ruth returns to Naomi
but rose up before a man could discern
his fellow; for he said, 'Let it not be
known that the woman came to the threshing-floor'.
15 And he said, 'Bring hither the cloak which is upon
thee, and hold it up'.

And she held it up, and he measured out six
measures of barley, and laid it upon her. And she
16 went into the city, and came to her mother in law,
who said, 'How hast thou fared, my daughter?'

Then she told her all that the man had done to
17 her. And she said, 'These six measures of barley he
gave me; for he said to me, Thou must not go empty-
handed to thy mother in law'.
18 Then said Naomi, 'Sit still, my daughter, until

14—18. *Ruth returns to Naomi.* This section brings the reader back to Ruth's relations with Naomi, the main theme of the book. Boaz gives Ruth a present for Naomi, with whom he seems to have come to an understanding (*cf.* iv. 1—8, summary); Ruth dutifully reports what has happened, and Naomi is confident that Boaz will take immediate action.

14. 'for he said,' *i.e.*, to himself, 'he thought,' as in iv. 4 and often in Hebrew. He dismisses her, not wishing her to be noticed for fear that her action might be misunderstood: *cf.* iii. 6—13, summary: iii. 13, with note.

15. 'cloak,' a word used only here and in Isai. iii. 22, but indicating the 'mantle' of iii. 3, similar to that which Boaz also would be wearing. 'six (measures) of barley.' The word for 'measures' is not in the Hebrew; probably 'omers' are intended, the 'omer' being the tenth part of the 'ephah' or bushel: *cf.* Exod. xvi. 36: Ruth ii. 17, with note. 'she went.' M.T. reads, 'he went,' but many MSS. and the Vulgate and the Peshitta read 'she went,' which is evidently right from what follows. Boaz does not come to the city till iv. 1.

16. 'How hast thou fared,' *lit.* 'who (and so, what, in what condition) art thou?' A unique idiom (*quis* with the meaning *qualis*) to which the nearest parallel is Amos vii. 2, 5. Perhaps we should read with the change of a letter, following the Vulgate, 'What (hast) thou (done)?' (Hummelauer). The ellipse would find an exact parallel in Judg. xviii. 8.

17. 'empty-handed': the same word as 'empty' in i. 21. Strictly speaking it is an adverb.

18. Naomi is confident: *cf.* ii. 20, note: iii. 1—5, summary.

thou know how the matter shall fall out; for the man will not rest until he settle the matter this very day'.

Chap. IV.

THE MARRIAGE

IV. Now Boaz went up to the city gate and 1
The kinsman there sat down. And behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken came by; and he said to him, 'Ho, such a one, turn aside and sit down here!'

And he turned aside and sat down. And Boaz took 2
ten men of the elders of the city, and said, 'Sit ye down here'.

And they sat down. And he said to the kinsman, 3

IV. 1—8. *The kinsman.* Boaz now goes up to the city gate from the threshing-floor and takes his seat there, probably while it is yet early morning, and before the work of the day has begun: *cf.* iii. 13. He first secures the presence of the nearer Goel, evidently letting him understand that he desires it for a serious purpose, and then the presence of some of the Bethlehem elders as witnesses (iv. 9—11). He appears confident of the result: *cf.* ii. 20, note. It must have been by arrangement with Naomi that he first mentions the sale of the plot of land (iv. 3), perhaps in order that the nearer Goel may profess himself such and thus be the more effectively disposed of. If the nearer Goel already knew all about Ruth, he had not felt himself rich enough to claim her (*cf.* iv. 6) and presumably for the moment hoped to acquire the land without her.

1. 'went up': *cf.* iii. 3, with note. 'the city gate': *cf.* iii. 11, note. 'city' is not in the Hebrew. 'Ho,' not in the Hebrew, of which however it gives the general effect. 'such a one,' a peculiar Hebrew expression, equivalent to our 'So and So.' Boaz names the individual, but the author either does not know the name or has not thought it worth while to record it (Hummelauer).

2. 'The elders' had considerable magisterial powers: *cf.* Deut. xix. 12: xxi. 2—4: I (III) Kings xxi. 8—14. Among other things, it was before them that the levirate law was to be vindicated (Deut. xxv. 7—9: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxvii—xxix).

3. 'Fields of Moab': *cf.* i. 1, note. 'our brother.' The word 'brother' could be used in a wide sense of a fellow-Hebrew, as in Exod. ii. 11, or of a fellow-tribesman, as in Num. xvi. 10, or of a fellow-clansman,

'Naomi, who hath returned from the Fields of Moab, is selling the plot of land which belonged to our
4 brother Elimelech. And I resolved to inform thee thereof, and to bid thee acquire it in the presence of those here seated and in the presence of the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know, for there is none to do so save thee, and I am after thee'.

And he answered, 'I will redeem it'.

5 And Boaz said, 'What day thou acquirest the field

as here (*cf.* ii. 1: we are told nothing further of the relationship), or of any nearer relation, as in I Chron. (Paral.) xxiii. 21—22. There was no distinctive word for 'cousin' in Hebrew, and even in the New Testament the word for 'cousin' occurs only in Col. iv. 10, while 'brother' occurs 360 times: *cf.* Westm. Vers., New Test., Vol. IV, appendix I, 'The Brethren of the Lord,' especially p. 212. On the question of Naomi's right to sell, see Introd., p. xxiv.

4. *lit.*, 'And as for me I said (*i.e.*, thought, resolved: *cf.* iii. 14, with note), I shall uncover thine ear (*i.e.*, inform thee), saying (*i.e.*, and say), acquire (*i.e.*, it).' The phrase 'uncover the ear' seems to have been used originally of secret information, disclosed after removing the hair or head-gear from about the ear: either God (*e.g.*, I Sam. [Kings] ix. 15) or man (*e.g.*, I Sam. [Kings] xx. 2, 12, 13) might 'uncover the ear.' 'those here seated' in general, followed by an especial mention of 'the elders' (the ten elders of iv. 2), as in iv. 9, 11. 'redeem,' *i.e.*, acquire as Goel, the verb corresponding to Goel being here used five times (being once rendered, 'to do so') as it is used four times in iii. 13, where see note. It is the precise form which the 'acquiring' is in this case to take. 'if thou wilt not redeem it.' M.T. reads, 'if he will not'; but the correction is supported by many manuscripts and the ancient versions, and is certain.

5. Boaz comes to the point; the discharge of the office of Goel in this case involves marrying Ruth: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxiv—xxv. The nearer kinsman does not question this, but merely protests his inability to do so (iv. 6: *cf.* Introd., p. xxvii). 'at the hand of Naomi': repeated in iv. 9, where see note. 'thou acquirest also Ruth.' M.T. renders instead, 'at the hand of Naomi, *and from Ruth*,' but the Vulgate and Peshitta presuppose the Hebrew text as here translated, which only differs from M.T. by one letter; it is urgently demanded by what follows, and is generally recognized to be correct. The LXX, and in a manner

at the hand of Naomi, thou acquirest also Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, thus to raise up the name of the dead upon his heritage'.

But the kinsman answered, 'I cannot redeem, lest I mar mine own heritage. Do thou take on thee my right of kin, for I cannot redeem'. 6

Now this was the custom aforetime in Israel at a redemption or exchange, for the ratifying of all things; a man drew off his sandal, and gave it to the other party. Such was the manner of attestation in Israel. 7

the targum, combine both readings. The verb twice rendered 'thou acquirest' in this verse is similarly rendered in iv. 4, 8, 9, 10. The root meaning is to 'get, acquire' (BDB); sometimes the verb means to buy (*e.g.*, Gen. xlvii. 22—23), but there is never any question of the Goel buying the woman he claims, either in the levirate law or in the more general usages. 'to raise up the name of the dead upon his heritage': *cf.* iv. 10. Such was the explicit purpose of the levirate law (Deut. xxv. 6—9), and of the duty of the Goel as recognized by Judah in Gen. xxxviii. 8: *cf.* Introd., pp. xix—xxvii. 'the name of the dead.' 'the dead' here must needs be 'the dead' just mentioned as the husband of Ruth, *i.e.*, Mahlon, who moreover is mentioned by name in iv. 10, just before the double mention there also of 'the dead.' But of course Mahlon's posterity is likewise Elimelech's: *cf.* ii. 20, with note, *ad fin.*

6. 'cannot redeem' (twice), *i.e.*, exercise my right as Goel both in regard of the field and of Ruth. 'take on thee my right of kin,' *lit.*, 'redeem thee my redemption,' with use both of the verb and of the abstract substantive corresponding to Goel. The substantive is the cognate object, meaning here 'right of redemption,' as (*e.g.*) in Levit. xxv. 29; in iv. 7 it means the act of redemption. The nearer Goel protests that he cannot afford to exercise his right and duty in the matter, and bids Boaz as the next Goel do it instead: *cf.* Introd., p. xxvi. 'lest I mar mine own heritage': *cf.* Introd., p. xxvii.

7. On the significance of drawing off the sandal and giving it to the other party, *cf.* Introd., p. xxix. It is evident that the writer is explaining a practice that had become more or less obsolete in his own time. It would be possible to regard this verse, with the sentence following, as a later explanation which had found its way into the text, as have probably some other such explanations into other books; but the story must be dated many generations before David: *cf.* iv. 20, note. Later on a deed would be required, as in the Goel transaction of Jerem. xxxii. 10—14.

8 So the kinsman said to Boaz, 'Acquire them for thyself'.

And he drew off his sandal.

Boaz claims Ruth

9 Then said Boaz to the elders and to the whole people:

'Ye are witnesses this day that I do acquire at the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, and all that belonged to Chilion and
10 Mahlon. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, do I acquire to be my wife, in order to raise up the name of the dead upon his heritage, and that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his native place: ye are witnesses thereto this day'.

11 And all the people that was at the gate and the elders said:

'We are witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that is to enter thy house to be as Rachel and as Leah,

8. 'Acquire them for thyself,' *i.e.*, the field and Ruth: *cf.* iv. 6, note. The word 'them' is not in the Hebrew, but must evidently be understood. On the word 'acquire,' here and in iv. 9, 10, *cf.* iv. 5, note. It is to be understood from iv. 7 that he handed his sandal to Boaz in token of renouncing his right in Boaz's favour.

9—12. *Boaz claims Ruth.* Boaz establishes publicly his claim upon Ruth. Neither she nor Naomi seems to be present, but he is already assured of their good will. With this transaction may be compared the even more typically oriental scene in Gen. xxiii. From the form which the good wishes take it is reasonably certain that Boaz was as yet unmarried: *cf.* Introd., p. xxii.

9. 'at the hand of Naomi,' as of a kind of quasi-Goel: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxiii—xxv. The phrase is repeated from iv. 5.

10. 'to raise up the name of the dead,' *etc.*: *cf.* iv. 5, with note. 'the dead' (twice), *i.e.*, Mahlon: *ibid.* 'the gate': *cf.* iii. 11, note.

11. 'as Rachel and as Leah': *cf.* Gen. xxix. 31—xxx. 24: xxxv. 18. 'build up the house': for this phrase, *cf.* Deut. xxv. 9. 'do thou prosper': *cf.* ii. 1, with note. Such prosperity as is here wished would imply moral worth and Jehovah's blessing. 'Ephrathah' is doubtless

which two did build up the house of Israel! Do thou prosper in Ephrathah, and make thee a name in Bethlehem! Thy house be as the house of Perez, 12
whom Tamar bare to Judah, by reason of the seed which Jehovah shall grant thee from this girl!'

The child

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his 13
wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said to Naomi: 14

'Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not let thee lack a kinsman this day! His name be famous in Israel! May he be the restorer of thy life and the sustainer 15

the same as 'Bethlehem,' to which it is here parallel: *cf.* i. 2, note. 'make thee a name': the Hebrew is a little difficult, and it is possible that some slight emendation should be adopted, with the same general sense. The two parallel good wishes are primarily intended to be fulfilled by the offspring of the marriage, and are expanded in the following verse.

12. Perez is mentioned as the ancestor of Boaz (iv. 18—21), and indeed of the Bethlemites in general (*cf.* I Chron. [Paral.] ii. 5, 18, 50—51), and also because of the circumstances of his birth: he was the son of the Goel, as the coming child was to be: *cf.* Introd., p. xxvi. With the second half of the verse, *cf.* I Sam. (Kings) ii. 20. 'girl': *cf.* ii. 5, note.

13—17. *The child.* This final section of the narrative contains the happy conclusion: Boaz marries Ruth, Naomi has her Goel, King David is to be a direct descendant. An emphatic tribute is paid to Ruth's devotion, and Naomi also appears in a pleasing light, as she extends her affection for Ruth to the new-born child. It is Naomi who has suffered most, and to her the final congratulations are addressed.

14. 'Blessed be Jehovah': a pious and affectionate formula of congratulation. 'kinsman,' *i.e.*, Goel, as always in this translation: *cf.* Introd., p. xv. 'this day,' in the new-born son: *cf.* iv. 5, with note: Introd., p. xxv. That Obed is meant is especially clear from the words (only one word in the Hebrew), 'who hath borne him,' in iv. 15.

15. *lit.*, 'For thy daughter in law, who loveth thee, hath borne him, who (*i.e.*, the daughter in law) is better,' *etc.* 'the restorer of thy life': the expression is found also (*e.g.*) in Ps. xxiii (xxii). 3. 'seven,' the sacred and ideal number: *cf.* Gen. ii. 2 (and the sabbath in general): xxxiii. 3: I Sam. (Kings) ii. 5 (but *cf.* I Sam. [Kings] i. 8): Matt. xviii. 21—22: Luke xvii. 4: *etc.*

of thine old age! For thy daughter in law, who hath borne him, loveth thee, yea, she is better to thee than seven sons'.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid him in her
17 bosom, and became his nurse. And the women, her neighbours, gave him a name, saying, 'A son is born to Naomi'.

And they called his name Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 Now these are the generations of Perez.
The genealogy
19 Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot
20 Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot

16. It is possible that Naomi adopts Obed, and that the women's remark in the next verse is to be understood in this sense. The general trend of the story, in which Naomi appears to possess something of the rights of a Goel (*cf.* Introd., pp. xxiv—xxv), removes much of the difficulty that might be felt in formal adoption by a woman. In adopting her grandchild she would be following the example of Jacob (Gen. xlviii. 5). The emphatic statement that Naomi became the child's nurse, however, makes strongly against her becoming something so much more important; and the women may well be commenting merely upon the advantage to herself in thus having a grandson.

17. The child would doubtless be given a name at his circumcision, upon the eighth day from birth (Gen. xvii. 12): *cf.* Luke i. 57—63, where also the friends and neighbours propose a name, though it is rejected in favour of that ordered from above (Luke i. 13). 'Obed' means 'servant'; probably we should understand, 'of Jehovah,' as in the name 'Obadiah.'

18—22. *The genealogy.* *Cf.* Introd., pp. xxxix—xl; it must remain a possible, but by no means a necessary hypothesis, that this genealogical note was added later. It agrees with the details in I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 5—15, apart from the name of Salmah, on which see iv. 20, note. It is repeated in Matt. i. 3—6: Luke iii. 31—33. Some notes follow upon the details of the genealogy, which is far from complete.

18. 'these are the generations of': the regular phrase used in Genesis (vi. 9: x. 1: *etc.*) and in Num. iii. 1, to introduce genealogies: Gen. ii. 4 follows the analogy. The genealogy starts from Perez because of his peculiar interest: *cf.* iv. 12, note. In I Chron. (Paral.) iv. 1

Salmah, and Salmah begot Boaz, and Boaz begot 21
Obed, and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. 22

Hezron is reckoned son to Judah, a good example of the possible compressions in genealogy. He came into Egypt with his father Perez (Gen. xlvi. 8, 12).

19. *Cf.* I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 9—10: this is not the Ram of I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 25, 27. If, as seems likely (since the name of both father and son agree), this is the Amminadab of Exod. vi. 23, the genealogy jumps over the sojourn in Egypt, the period summed up in Exod. i. 7. The Greek text of Luke iii. 33 offers a difficulty, which need not be discussed; the Vulgate reading there, and also the Greek of Matt. i. 3—4, agree with the present text and I Chron. (Paral.).

20. 'Nahshon' appears to have been son of Amminadab in the strict sense, and was a contemporary of Moses and Aaron: *cf.* iv. 19, note: Exod. vi. 23: Num. i. 7: ii. 3: vii. 12, 17: x. 14. M.T. reads 'Salmah' in this verse, and 'Salmon' in the next, but it is incredible that the names were different in the original, and I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 11 may be allowed to decide in favour of the former, although the spelling shows a slight difference. The 'Salma' of I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 51, 54 (although the name is spelt as in I Chron. [Paral.] ii. 11) is evidently a different person. Nothing further is known from the Old Testament of the Salma of I Chron. (Paral.) ii. 11, but in Matt. i. 5 he is said to have begotten Boaz by Rahab. Doubtless this was the Jewish tradition, and indicates the 'Rahab' of Jos. ii, vi: Hebr. xi. 31: James ii. 25: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxxiv—xxxv. Chronologically this offers no difficulty, since (as has been said) Nahshon was a contemporary of Moses and Aaron; most of the period of Judges must therefore be inserted between Obed and Jesse.

21. The true genealogy of Obed is given, although we might have expected the mention of Mahlon and Elimelech from iv. 5, 10, where see notes. The actual text makes against the attribution of this section to a later writer, who would have been more careful of the apparent requirements of the narrative. As a matter of fact, however, there does not appear to be in the Old Testament any certain case of a genealogy being taken through a Goel without explanation; and one obvious explanation of the diversity in Our Lord's genealogy between Matthew and Luke is that a genealogy might indicate either the real or the legal father.

22. On Jesse see especially I Sam. (Kings) xvi—xvii. 'Son of Jesse' was at first a somewhat contemptuous epithet for David, as in I Sam. (Kings) xx. 30—31; but Isaiah (xi. 1) associates his name with one of the most glorious of the messianic prophecies. The formal genealogy here, like the short note in iv. 17, culminates in David, from whom the story derived much of its interest: *cf.* Introd., pp. xxxix—xl.

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